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The Role of School Principals in Improving Students' Academic Performance in Secondary Schools of Sidama Zone, SNNPR

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Abstract

This paper is aimed at examining the roles played by school principals in improving students? academic achievement in secondary schools of Sidama zone in Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples? Region of Ethiopia. It is a mixed type of research, which employed both qualitative and quantitative data. The findings of the study indicated that school principals have not adequately played roles expected of them to improve students? performance. Most of them do not have adequate training in school management and are subject teachers who were currently promoted to principal-ship position. They attempted to maintain their status quo rather than introducing changes. Those challenges hindering school principals from promoting students? academic performance do exist at the moderate level and some of the major challenges were large class size, failure to introduce new programs to school curriculum, lack of commitment on the part of school community and lack of school pedagogical centers.

Index terms— academic performance, secondary schools, sidama zone, SNNPR.

1 I. Introduction

he success or failure of a school is usually attributed to the level of principals' leadership effectiveness. A school principal is the pivot around which many aspects of the school revolve, being the person in charge of every detail of running the school, be it academic or administrative. Schools can make a difference to students' achievement and the principal's leadership is one those factors determining that success. It is therefore important that the performance of a school is appraised against the performance of the person who leads it.

In school compound, principals are the most important individuals while the teaching-learning process is the crucial activity that principals should run properly in order to promote students performance. To ensure this, principals need to update themselves with different contemporary leadership practices using different long and short term trainings because the effectiveness of a school is directly or indirectly related to the leadership effectiveness of the principal running it. A vast body of research on effective schools provides consistent evidence that effective leadership is the key factor for school improvement and student achievement (Duke & Stiggins, 1985). School leaders do have a quantifiable, yet predominantly indirect influence on student outcomes (Mulford, 2008). **??**anyama (2013), also adds that the success of a school to a great extent depends upon its principal.

If school principals exert more of their time on improving the quality of teaching and learning in their school, then they are likely to have a far greater influence on student outcomes. Many scholars (like Gamage, Adams and McCormack 2009) have acknowledged that the role of school principal is the most significant in enhancing school performance and students achievements. Principals' influence on teachers will indirectly be observed on students. Pont, Nusche and Hunter (2008) explain that principals can affect the working conditions and motivations of their teachers, who do directly influence classroom practice and student learning.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to assess the role of school principals as leaders in improving students' academic performance in secondary schools of Sidama zone, in Southern Nations' Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) of Ethiopia. Accordingly, principals' efforts in improving students' performance, teachers' and

school leaders' perception of principals attempts to enhance students' performance, and challenges encountered so far are examined in this study. Accordingly, the study attempted to answer the following basic questions:

1) To what extent have the school principals played their roles in improving students' academic performance in secondary schools of Sidama Zone? 2) What is the perception of teachers and school leaders towards principals' roles in improving students' academic performance in the target secondary schools? 3) What are the major challenges hindering principals' attempts to promote students' academic performance in those schools? affecting student achievement clearly indicates principals must have a thorough understanding of their roles as instructional leaders. In addition, principals must also have the ability to fulfil each of their roles as instructional leaders by effectively utilizing researched based practices. Successful schools in challenging environments usually have leaders who engage closely with, and are consequently highly trusted by their schools' key stakeholders and surrounding community **??**Hargreaves, Halasz & Pont, 2008). These leaders spent more time in schools with children and placed more focus on improving student welfare and attainment through involvement with partners in their wider community including sports clubs, businesses, and religious groups (Price water house Coopers, 2007). One of the findings from the study conducted by Sebastian and Allensworth (2012) indicates that student achievement was related to principal leadership, but only through the learning climate created.

Similarly, through a statistical process known as meta-analysis, researchers such as Waters, Marzano, and **??**cNulty (2004) analyzed the results of 70 principal leadership studies and found certain direct leadership practices significantly correlated with improved student achievement. Among these were systematically visiting classrooms, frequently interacting with students, publicly celebrating accomplishments of students, and maintaining visibility around the school. Generally, many scholars have acknowledged that the role of school principal is the most significant in enhancing school performance and students achievements.

Hallinger's (2010) review of empirical research on school leadership also inferred that leaders can have indirect or mediated positive effects on student achievement by building a collaborative organizational learning culture, and helping to develop the leadership capacities of staff and community. Relevant literature (e.g., **??**ay et al., 2016;Mulford, 2008) have concurred that school leaders do have a quantifiable, yet predominantly indirect influence on student outcomes. The impact that school leaders can have on student learning is often moderated by other factors including teacher quality, classroom procedures and school environment.

2 b) How do Principals Affect Students' Learning?

Discussions about the scope of principal's job too often focus on a to do list: helping teachers improve their teaching using data to review and refine the instructional program and enduring that the school is kept clean and safe. The more abstract but very tangible elements of leadership, however, are often what spell the difference between adequate and excellent principals. The research can address this aspect of the link between principal leadership and students learning.

Louis et al (2010) offered a definition of leadership that is distilled from the essence of their findings leadership is all about organization improvement; more specially, it is about establishing agreed-upon and worthwhile directions for the organization in question, and doing whatever it takes to prod and support people to move in those directions.

Other researchers conducted meta-analysis that focused on the relationship between leadership and students achievement. They also found that principal leadership is corrected with student achievement and that there were especially strong links between specific principal behaviours and student learning. One such behavior was the extent to which the principal is aware of the details and under currents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems (Waters, Morzano, and **??**cnulty, 2004). In the view of those researchers, effective leadership means more than knowing what to do-it's knowing when, how, and why to do it **??**Waters et al, 2004).

In recent report, the Wallace foundation (2011) identified five key functions of principal leadership: Shaping vision of academic success for all students, creating a climate hospitable to education, a cooperative spirit and other foundations of fruitful interaction prevail; cultivating leadership in others so that teachers and other adults assume their part in realizing the school vision; improving instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best and students to learn at their utmost and managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement.

The report identified an important qualification about those key leader functions: Each of these five tasks needs to interact with the other four for any part to succeed. **??**t "The only factor that increased student achievement was the significance of the teacher. Thus, administrators create good schools and good teachers create good classrooms." (p.1) Therefore, any form of leadership that helps to increase teachers' knowledge of their content and improve their classroom management skills should be a consideration.

In essence, the primary role of the principal is to increase individual teacher efficiency and the staffs' collective efficacy. That means a principal needs to recognize individual teachers' beliefs about their ability to influence student learning. The collective efficacy represents teachers' perceptions regarding the staff ability as a whole to ensure student learning. In relation to this idea, **??**cquigan (2009) states, "if the daily actions of principals make a difference in student academic achievement, schools can be improved by improving or replacing principals" (p.2). So if a school principal devotes more of his effort and resources towards teachers' empowerment for the betterment of students 'achievement, teachers will develop positive attitude towards their principal.

In the past, few researches have been conducted on teachers' views on principal practices that positively

influence their classroom practices. A study conducted by Blase and Blase (2001) investigated teachers' descriptions of their principals' attitudes, strategies, behaviours and goals that had an influence on their classroom instruction. Barnett, Marsh, and Craven's (2003) study on teacher satisfaction also indicates that teachers were positively influenced by their principals' individualized considerations and negatively influenced by their principals' laissez-faire leadership behaviours. In addition to the above authors, Berube, Gaston and Stephans (2004) state that teacher perceptions of principal as instructional leader can have a major impact on the school, which in turn can influence students' performance.

Bulach, Boothe and Pickett's (2006) research on teachers' perceptions of principals suggests that principals' human relation skills, levels of trust, the way decisions are made, and the failure to empower subordinates and deal with conflict are often why principals are either successful or not successful as educational leaders.

3 d) Challenges that Principals Encounter in Improving

Students' Performance The principal's efforts to improve students' academic performance are not easy tasks. They may be hindered by several factors which the principal should overcome. Njuguna (2004) found out in her research that some of the factors that have negative impact on students' performance were: inadequacy of some teaching/learning resources, lack of efficient school based curriculum monitoring, inability by the teachers to complete the syllabuses in time, students' characteristics such as indiscipline, poor entry behaviour, frequent absenteeism, and inadequate parents' participation in school affairs due to poverty.

Major factors that affect a secondary school principals' practices could be associated with: poor management, budget deficit, pupils with low internal efficiency, poor motivation and self esteem, inadequate school resources including buildings, academic staff, and low levels of parent involvement. As indicated above, principal's tasks are complex and need a lot of efforts to overcome them. Some of these challenges can be external and attributed to local government politicians, the community, government policies and the likes. Likewise, school principals can face many challenges internally like problems related to teachers, students, and school administration. Teachers' lack of commitment and uncooperative attitudes, coupled with lateness and alcoholism, which affects the output negatively are challenges for head teachers today (Kusi, 2008).

The 21st century expectations of schools are now requiring different types of leadership skills from principals. This stems from the fact that in addition to instructional and programming pressures, today's principals are also facing challenges that include budgetary reductions, school safety, contract administration, supervision, data management and marketing. Thus, in addition to effective instructional leadership skills, a principal's effectiveness during this new educational era will also require complex knowledge and skills related to organizational culture and management.

4 II. Research Design and Methodology

In this study, attempts were made to describe the role of school principals in improving students' academic performance in selected secondary schools of Sidama Zone. Hence, descriptive survey research design was employed, as it enables a researcher to describe the current status of an area of study (Best & Khan, 2003). Descriptive survey research method allows the researcher to gather data from relatively large number of respondents within short period of time with minimum cost. "Descriptive research attempts to describe systematically a situation, problem, phenomenon or attitudes towards an issue" **??**Kumar, 2005:8). It reduces the absence observed and easily describes every phenomenon under studies. So the researcher employed this research design weighing its convenience.

As far as the research method is concerned, both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed to offset the weakness of one by another. The researcher initially used quantitative method through survey questionnaire, while he also employed interview and FGD to substantiate the quantitative data. There is a rationale to use multiple approaches in this study. First, using such method is advantageous to examine the same phenomenon from multiple perspectives (Cohen et al., 2007). Second, this approach is important to build upon the strength that exists between quantitative and qualitative methods in order to understand a given phenomenon than is possible using either quantitative or qualitative methods alone (Creswell, 2003).

5 a) Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques

The target populations of the study were secondary school principals, teachers, PTA members, and wereda education office experts. The researcher assumed they are the right sources of information for this study. In Sidama Zone, there are 19 Woredas/districts. For this study, 5 Weredas, were selected using simple random sampling techniques to get representative samples and to allow every subject get equal chance of being selected. In the selected sample weredas there are 20 secondary schools out of which 10 schools (50%) were selected by using simple random sampling technique. This is because the researcher believed that the schools are almost in the same status to be selected uniformly. The secondary schools included are Dila Aferara, Telamo-Tumano, Haroshifa, Kenera, Tuticha, Bursa, Hawassa Langano, Jara Dado, Malga-Madicho and Wotararesa, secondary schools.

In the selected secondary schools, there are 320 teachers and 100 school leaders (principals, vice principals, unit leaders and department heads). Out of these, 160 (50%) of the teachers, and 40 (40%) of the school leaders

were selected to be the participants of the study through simple random sampling technique (see table 1). This is to get representative samples and to let every subject have equal chance to be selected. Moreover, 10 members of PTA (one from each school) and 5 wereda/district education office experts were included in the study purposively based on their rich experience and the direct concern they have with the issue under investigation.

6 b) Instruments of Data Collection

To get relevant information from respondents, different data gathering tools were employed. Accordingly, questionnaire was conducted with teachers and school leaders because their number is relatively larger while interview items were conducted with wereda education office (WEO) experts. Data from Parent Teacher Association (PTA) members were solicited through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method. Out of all the questionnaires dispatched to respondents, 150 (93.75%) from teachers and 40 (100%) from school leaders were properly retrieved and used for data analysis. To rate respondents' attitude, Likert scales ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) and rating scales ranging from very Low (1) to very high (5) were employed. The content validity of the instruments was checked by involving three experts currently working at Hawassa University while the reliability of the instrument (questionnaire) was checked by randomly selecting 30 teachers in the neighbouring secondary school (named Motto secondary school), which is excluded from the sample schools. Accordingly, the overall coefficient of reliability test for all items was found to be 0.87, which indicates that questions in each construct measure similar concept. As suggested by Cronbach (cited in Tech-Hong & Waheed, 2011), the reliability coefficients between 0.82-0.94 are generally found to be internally consistent.

To make good relationship and avoid confusion during the interview sessions, the investigator already made pre-contact with the interviewees. Establishing rapport is, according to Best and Khan (2009), the key to effective interviewing. Data from parent teacher association (PTA) members were solicited using focus group discussions. The focus group consisted of 10 individuals, as per the suggestion of Marczyk, DeMatto and Festinger (2005). These authors recommend that the number of FGD participants should typically be composed of several participants, usually 6 to 10 individuals. The discussion lasted for 35 minutes and the researcher acted as a moderator, listener, observer, and eventually analyst using an inductive process (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The researcher selected FGD as an instrument because it presents a more natural environment than that of an individual interview and participants are influencing and influenced by others just as they are in life (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

7 c) Data Analysis

In this study both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques were employed. The quantitative data obtained through questionnaires were edited, categorized tallied, and tabulated. The data, then, were analyzed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics. Thus, mean, standard deviation and independent sample t-test were used. The results were obtained and the relationship of each variable is thoroughly interpreted and discussed on the basis of key question. Quantitative analysis was done through the software called Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.The qualitative data gathered through interview and focus group discussion were described as supplementary evidence in addition to the discussions of quantitative data. The data were analyzed using narrative description and quoting as it is. Finally, conclusions were drawn from the major findings.

8 d) Ethical Considerations

Responding to interviews, attending FGD and filling questionnaires require significant time and energy. Its participation could also disrupt respondents' regular activity. For this reason, the researcher got consent of the respondents by explaining the objective and significance of the study and allowing them to exercise their right to participate voluntarily. To avoid any psychological harm, questions were framed in a manner that they could not disrupt the respondents' feelings. The respondents were informed that the information they provide would be kept confidential.

9 III.

10 Results

11 a) Roles Played by Principals in order to Improve

Students' Academic Performance Table 2 describes the degree of roles played by school principals in improving students' academic performance. To this end, 8 items were forwarded to respondents to obtain their opinion. Accordingly, the following rating scales were used to compute the responses obtained:

? The mean scores from the data analysis were interpreted as follows: ? 2.59 low, 2.60 -3.39 medium, ?3.40 high. Note: Throughout all the tables, SD-is standard deviation; t-value is independent sample t-test. P is significant at $p < 0.05$.

As it can be seen in Table 2 item 1, the principals' roles in creating confidence among students was rated to be low by teachers with x ?=2.33, SD=1.23, indicating extent of creating confidence among students by school

principals to be low, while the school leaders (x ?=2.75, SD=1.20) revealed that the extent of creating confidence among students by school principals was at the moderate level. On the other hand, the calculated ttest value (t= -1.39, p>0.05) showed that there is statistically no significant difference between the teachers and school leaders on this issue. This implies that extent of creating confidence among students in directing them towards goals to be achieved was below satisfactory.

Table 2 item 2 presents the extent of principals modelling best practices of the school. In this concern, the mean scores of teachers (x ?=2.53, SD=1.14) was moderate while that of the school leaders (x ?=2.40, SD=1.09) indicated that principals level modelling best practice of the school was rated to be low. On the other hand, the calculated t-test value (t=.468, p<0.05) showed that there is statistically significant difference between teachers and school leaders on the extent to which principals model best practices of their schools. In spite of the existence of significant difference between the two groups, it could be understood that, principals modelling best practice of the school is almost rated to be inadequate.

In the interview conducted with wereda education office experts, one of the interviewees (Exp 1) revealed the following:

Principals have exerted their efforts to take best practices as models for the betterment of students' learning but the practices are inadequate and lack consistency. So this is among the issues need to be emphasized by school principals.

Table 2 item 3 indicates the extent to which principals build trust and respect among students in order to improve students' academic performance. The mean score of teachers (x ?=2.46, MD=1.17) showed minimum efforts made in this regard, while the school leaders (x ?=2.75, SD=1.11) rated this item to be moderate. This indicates that the level of efforts exerted by principals to build trust and respect among their students is insufficient. It was seen that there is statistically significance difference between the two groups of respondents, with the t-test value (t=-1.01, p= .012<0.05). This showed that principal's made minimum efforts with regard to this item. During the discussions made with the PTA members, the following points were raised concerning this issue:

12 Principals and those working in managerial positions in our school are not well concerned with hearing students' grievances. Every time students come to offices for information or complaints, nobody want to give them attention including the secretary.

Here, one can understand that, even though school leaders wanted to suppress the fact by rating the item moderate (x ?= 2.75), teachers and the PTA members opined that the efforts made by principals to build trust and respect among students was at its minimum level.

As it can be seen in Table 2, statistically significant differences were observed between respondents as shown by item 4 (P= .040<0.05) and item 7 (P = .009<0.05). In the remaining items (items 5, 6 and 8), no significant opinion differences were observed between the respondents.

Overall, as per the cut points previously set, school principals' roles in improving students' academic performance in secondary schools of Sidama Zone was rated to be below average by both teachers (x ?=2.36) and school leaders (x ?= 2.51). There is also statistically no significant difference between the two groups (P=.353> 0.05). The interview result from experts (Exp 2 and 3) is summarized as follows in relation to this concept:

Principals' roles in improving students' academic performance in our secondary schools is said to be minimal. For instance, the activities undertaken in schools starting from conducting the teaching and learning process till the provision of tests and exams were not given adequate attention. Especially, the exam system in our schools needs to be revised. Students are seated in classes in crowded form and invigilators are not serious in their invigilation, which gives way for cheating. Let alone on quizzes and tests, our principals are not serious in warning the invigilators during national exams. So how can we talk of student achievement in such an environment?

As clearly put by the interviewees, academic honesty is one of the issues need to be considered by principals if they want to promote students' performance. **??**ilkinson (2009) put that cheating is considered as one of the forms of academic misconduct that has become one of the biggest concerns of educational institutions. This may discourage hard-working students and affect school assessment system. In relation to this, Boulville (2008) writes that cheating undermines not only learning but also the validity and reliability of assessment.

From educators and administrators in understanding because cheating undermines not only learning (Boulville, 2008) but also the validity and reliability of assessment.

13 b) Perception Level of Teachers and School Leaders

Table 3 presents teachers' and school leaders' perception of principals' roles in improving students' performance. Accordingly, 10 items were presented to the respondents to obtain their opinions on different issues.

14 Key:

M-is mean, SD-is standard deviation, t-is independent sample t-test and P is significant at $p < 0.05$.

The mean scores from the data analysis were interpreted as follows: ?2.59 low, 2.60-3.39 medium, ?3.40 high.

As shown in table 3 item 1, the respondents were requested whether school principals skilfully develop different programs that improve the instruction or not. In this regard, the calculated mean scores of teachers (x ?=1.72, SD=.092) indicated disagreement with the issue, while school leaders (x ?=2.88, SD=1.42) seem to agree with the issue by rating the item moderate. On the other hand, the calculated t-test value (t= -7.55, p=.000<0.05) shows that there is statistically significant difference between the two respondents on the issue. The FGD participants raised the following points concerning this issue:

In our schools, principals seem to keep their status quo rather than introducing different programs and practices to their schools for improvement of the instructional program. Supports given to teachers who are in need of conducting action research to improve instruction were also minimal.

Therefore, it could be concluded that principal have not adequately developed various programs that improve the instructional program. As to Nasseh and Strauss (2000), schools must develop cultures, structures, and programs that support diverse students, staff, and faculty and need to develop activities and curricula that provide opportunities to learn about cultural diversity, race, ethnicity, and gender.

Concerning the rest of the items, except items 5 and 9 where the respondents' ratings were average, the mean computational results of the two groups were found to be minimal. Overall, the average mean of teachers (x ?= 2.21) and that of school leaders (x ?= 2.30) imply that the respondents unanimously rated principals' attempt in improving students' academic performance to be below average. The finding indicates that principal in the sample schools have not worked well to promote students' performance. Leithwood, Harris and Strauss (2010) explain that the principal is second only to teacher influence to improve student achievement. The P-value (P= .588>0.05) shows that there is no statistically significant difference between teachers and school leaders on this issue. Key: n= number of respondents, SD-is standard deviation, t-is independent sample t-test and P is significant at $p < 0.05$. The mean scores from the data analysis were interpreted as follows: ? 2.59 low, 2.60 -3.39 medium, ?3.40 high.

As depicted by items 1, 2 and 4 of table 4, both teachers and school leaders rated lack of adequate classroom, failure to facilitate favourable conditions for parents' participation and lack adequate computers in the schools to be the major challenges of school principals, with the average means of 3.60, 3.71 and 3.75 respectively. Especially, lack of adequate classrooms forced the target secondary schools to include many students in a single classroom. However, this is against the policy of MoE, which suggests not to put more than 40 students in a class at secondary level. In relation to this issue, one of the wereda education office experts (Exp4) revealed the following fact:

The problem of large class size is among the major obstacles not only to school principals but also to teachers in our schools. Sometimes teachers encounter large numbers as high as 65 students in a class, which makes situations very difficult for teachers, especially when they want to treat students individually as per their behaviours. So I personally suggest that the schools should mobilize the local community for the construction of additional classes if the regional government is not in a position to envisage this in the near future.

Many writers have raised the issue of class size at different times. For instance, Imoke (2006) puts that optimum class size implies rational coordination of educational infrastructures, subject to available number of students in order to attain high level of productivity. Managing class size allows students to learn effectively without disturbing one another (Garret, 2008). Contrary to the issues raised by the above authors, if the class size is too large for students to attend, it can have a serious drawback on students' performance. For example, Rubin (2012) indicated in his finding that, as the class size increases, student achievement declines. In their study of "Impact of Class Size on Students' Academic Performance in Biology" .Ruffina, Esther and Anastecia (2018) explained the following drawbacks of large class size:

Large class size may generate a lot of controversy due to the difficulty of teachers to work with large class size. These controversies may serve as thorns that crumble the performance of students in biology at the senior secondary school level. Some of these problems may be; teachers may find it difficult to use varied teaching methodologies in teaching, students may find it difficult to concentrate in the class, teachers may find it difficult to control the students in school leadership and management, lack of regular supervisory support from the concerned education officials and lack of adequate resources were also among the top rated challenges to principals with the average means of 3.84, 3.77, 3.79, 3.69 and 3.70 respectively. Here, in table 4, lack of resources was among the major challenges rated by the two groups of respondents with the average mean (x ?= 3.70).

In the responses to the open-ended items, the respondents confirmed that there is shortage of resources like classrooms, text books, computers and school pedagogical centers. The availability and use of instructional materials affects the effectiveness of a teacher's lesson, which indirectly affects students' academic performance (Wakarindi, 2013). Accordingly, any trace of inadequacy leads to frustration among teachers and students, which negatively affects students' academic performance.

The top-most challenge rated to be very serious by the school leaders with mean (x ?= 3.88), here, is lack of adequate training on school leadership and management for principals. The ideas of PTA members during FGD are summarized as follow with regard to this issue:

A principal, as an instructional leader, needs to treat student as a student and teacher as a teacher, if the aim

is to bring about better academic performance among students; however, we do not think our school principals have succeeded in this area because most of them do not have adequate training in school management. Majority of them are subject teachers who were currently promoted to principalship position. Similar to the above result, the finding of a study conducted by Yasser and Amal (2015) on teachers' perceptions of principals' instructional leadership in Omani schools indicated the need for principals to be trained in instructional leadership, especially in the field of managing instructional programs in their schools.

To sum, the challenges rated to be higher by respondents in table 4 require principals in the study area to exert more of their efforts to overcome the problems and promote students' performance.

Contrary to the aforementioned items, which were rated to be the highest hindering factors, items 3, 6 and 9 were rated by the respondents to be the lowest hindering factors that school principals encountered. These were indicated by the average mean computational results of 3.13, 3.58 and 3.18 respectively.

In general, as per the data from table 4, teaches indicated by their overall mean ((x ?= 3.64) that challenges hindering school principals from promoting students' academic performance do exist at the moderate level, while the school leaders rated the existence of these factors to be at the lowest level, with the overall mean (x ? = 3.57), as per the cut points previously set. In spite of the existence of opinion differences between the two groups, the calculated tvalue (t= .462, P=.649> 0.05) shows that there is no statistically significant opinion difference between the two groups.

In the interview conducted with them, the wereda education office expert (Exp 5) mentioned the following, which is summarized as follows:

We observed many challenges hindering principals from promoting students' academic performance. Among these, the most serious ones in our opinion are lack of pedagogical centers, less commitment on the part of the school community and lack of adequate training on school leadership and management.

As depicted by table 3 above, these three items are also rated to be high by the responses given to the quantitative data.

15 IV.

16 Conclusions

School principals' role in improving students' academic performance in the target secondary schools of Sidama Zone was rated to be below average by teachers, school leaders and wereda education office experts. Weak supervision of school-based and national exams by principals paved ways to cheating during examinations. Principals have not adequately developed various programs to improve the quality of instruction. The respondents also opined that bringing about better academic achievement among students should have been the prime role of a school principal. Nevertheless, it was rated that principals' attempts in this area was below average. Among the hindering factors to students' academic achievement is large class size. It has been stressed by many writers that, as the class size increases, student achievement declines. However, principals' role in relation to this was rated to be inadequate. Most of the school principals do not have adequate training in school management and majority of them are subject teachers who were currently promoted to principal-ship position. As per the data from teaches, challenges hindering school principals from promoting students' academic performance do exist at the moderate level, while the school leaders rated the existence of these factors to be at the lowest level. [1]

1

No.	Target	Population	Sample	%	Sampling Technique
1	Teachers	320	160	50	Random sampling
2	School Leaders	80	40	50	Random sampling
3	WEO experts	10	5	50	Purposive
4	PTA	50	10	20	Purposive

Figure 1: Table 1 :

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SN	Items	Respondents Type				t-value
		Teachers (N=150)		School Leaders(N=40)		
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1	Efforts to create confidence among students	2.33	1.23	2.75	1.20	-1.39
2	Extent of taking best practices as models for students learning	2.53	1.14	2.40	1.09	.468
3	Extent of building trust and respect among students	2.46	1.17	2.75	1.11	-1.01
4	Attempt to treat others as individual rather than as a group	2.22	1.39	1.86	1.14	-2.06
5	Ability to assemble resource for certain task achievement	2.36	.858	2.35	.933	.091
6	Extent of supervising teaching and learning	2.73	1.25	2.90	1.20	-.557
7	Efforts to communicate vision, mission and goals to the school community for the betterment of students performance	2.24	.874	2.85	.875	-.512
8	Analysis of exam results to identify students academic performance problems	2.04	.738	2.20	.767	-.888
	Overall	2.36	.211	2.51	.37	-.961

Figure 2: Table 2 :

3

Performance

Figure 3: Table 3 :

4

SN	Items	Teachers (n=150)		Respond School leaders (
		Mean	SD	Mean
1	Lack of adequate class room in the school	4.00	.587	3.20
2	failure in facilitating favorable conditions to make parents to participate in different school activities	3.76	.727	3.67
3	Lack of adequate pupil text book ratio	3.37	1.37	2.89
4	Lack adequate computers in the school	3.90	1.15	3.60
5	Lack pedagogical center	4.07	.828	3.62
6	Shortage of budget	3.49	1.46	3.67
7	Lack of school community commitment	3.58	1.28	3.96
8	Lack of adequate training on school leadership and management	3.70	1.33	3.88
9	Lack of experience to manage and mobilize the school community towards shared goal	2.92	1.58	3.44
10	Lack of regular supervisory support from the concerned education officials	3.70	1.18	3.68
11	Lack of educational resource (financial and material)	3.60	1.29	3.80
	Overall	3.64	.32	3.58

Figure 4: Table 4 :

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