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Comparative Analyses of Education Quality in Primary Schools of Gedeo Zone: Public Vs Private Controversy, Analyzed against Resources Allocation

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Abstract

The objective of the study was to investigate the persistent debate as to whether public or private schools provide better quality education, focusing on resource allocation as a measure of commitment to educational quality. An input model was employed for comparing schools' commitment for ensuring education quality. Besides, quantitatively slanted mixed-method approach, with concurrent design were used. Primary data were collected from staff, and secondary data were gathered through document analysis and observation of school facilities. Quantitative data were analyzed employing independent sample t-tests and eta-squared (η^2) with the help of SPSS software, while qualitative data were narrated under relevant theme. The findings revealed mixed results. Public schools excel in terms of teachers' qualifications, professional leadership, supervision, financial resource allocation and school facilities. Conversely, private schools were found to be more committed in providing books and maintaining aesthetics of the school environment. However, neither of the school type provided the ideal standards of human, financial and material resources. Likewise, the study concluded the suffering of education quality from shortfall of resource allocation in both school types. This calls for joint effort by education bureaus, schools leaders, teachers and parent for ending the trend. That is, emphases need to be made on human development and resource mobilization in both school categories; indeed, the teaching-learning process in public schools needs special attention.

1 Background

The definition of quality in education is illusive and difficult to agree upon. It is diverse, but scholars, politicians, and professionals are still trying to assess and improve it by exploring and improving its meaning. Quality in education is frequently evaluated using criteria including excellence, relevance, equity, and efficiency, according to recent research (UNESCO, 2023; OECD, 2021). Common standards for assessing quality now include metrics like completion and survival rates, as well as quantifiable inputs like funding, trained instructors, and sufficient course materials (World Bank, 2022).

Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) models are among the frameworks that continue to offer a strong foundation for evaluating the quality of education. Alharbi and Refai (2020) and other recent studies emphasize the crucial role that material, financial, and human resources play in determining learning environments and results. Adedeji and Ojo (2021) and UNESCO (2023) also stress the need of adequate finance, well-equipped schools, and efficient teaching methods in promoting aca-

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demic success. These inputs have a direct impact on students' academic performance and the standard of education as a whole, when combined with supportive procedures.

It is global phenomenon that both public and private school categories prevail jointly, each having own strengths and weakness. According to empirical studies from Lagos-Nigeria, public schools have more qualified teachers than private ones, but they are blamed for inadequate facilities, packed classrooms, and lax disciplinary procedures that discourage parents (Adedeji & Ojo, 2021). Besides, Mabel and Olasunkanmi (2012) analyzed the practice in the same city (Lagos): As to them, public schools outshine for teachers quality over private schools. However, they affirm that public schools are criticized for poor school discipline, shortage of seats, stuffy and rowdy classrooms being obstruction to academic output. Likewise, parental choice to private schools has been increasing than ever before. For example, wealthier households in Kenya were seen sending children to private schools due to perceptions of improved school settings and customized attention; attendance at private schools has also climbed dramatically in urban areas (UNICEF, 2021). Consequently, proportion of children in Kenyan private primary schools shows significant increment from 4.8 - 12.2% in between 2004 – 2007 (Nishimura & Yamano, 2008). In Ethiopia, the rise in proportion of private schooling recently accounts to 8.3% (MoE, 2023), which is roughly equivalent to the neighboring Kenyan practice. In fact, public choice for schools differs among nations, eras, educational levels, and home environments. Numerous elements, such as educational quality, teacher conduct, and school discipline, affect parents' decisions. By and large, parental preferences are heavily influenced by amenities and safety even though academic excellence is a top concern (World Bank, 2022; UNESCO, 2023). This partly agrees with the trend in Ethiopia, where majority of parents prefer public schools due to abolition of fees; and yet few parents favor private school for academic excellence and based on their economic capacity to afford.

Since the implementation of the 1994 Education and Training Policy (ETP), Ethiopia has made significant progress in expanding its education system, particularly at the primary level. The policy encouraged private sector involvement in education, which led to the establishment of both public and private schools. However, by 2021, government-owned schools still accounted for approximately 93% of primary schools in the country (MoE, 2023; Global Partnership for Education/GPE, 2023). The MoE also reported impressive gains in enrollment; with the gross enrollment rate (GER) reaching 95.1% and the net enrollment ratio (NER) standing at 86.4% at primary level (GPE, 2023).

Despite these advancements, the education sector continues to face significant challenges. Critics have pointed out that the rapid expansion of education has not been equitable, especially for girls, children in rural and pastoral areas, and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (World Bank, 2008; UKFIET, 2023). These groups still face barriers to accessing quality education, which has led to concerns about the inclusivity of the education system (GPE, 2023). While Ethiopia has made strides in improving access, the country still grapples with gender disparities and regional inequalities, especially in more remote areas (UKFIET, 2023). Efforts such as the General Education Quality Improvement Program (GEQIP) have helped to improve educational infrastructure, but challenges remain in achieving equitable outcomes across the nation (GPE, 2023).

2 Problem formulation

The public-private controversy is among the hottest debate pertaining to education quality all over the world. As indicated by scholars like Nishimura and Yamano (2008), there appear mixed findings as to whether public or private schools provide education of better quality. For instance, a comparative study conducted on public and private primary schools in Pakistan, the predominant findings show that private schools perform better than public schools, nevertheless both face a number challenges. Additionally, both school types were identified for depriving quality of human and material resources (Shabbir, *et al*., 2014). Besides, a report by Gandhi (1996) is a typical example indicating an important aspect of the debate on the quality of schooling in

both categories: Among other things, the report revealed the superiority of the private schools as far as quality issue is concerned. That is mainly because of their accountability to parents who pay fees, competition among providers and decentralized management. On the other hand, a study conducted in Pakistan by Ali *et al* (2012) revealed existence of poor education in both the private and public schools; but, confirmed prominence of education quality in public schools.

As of the 1994 ETP, Ethiopia had formulated education & training policy, strategies and relevant programs, which were aimed at improving educational expansion, quality, relevance and equity. For example, the general education quality improvement program(GEQIP), which had been under implementation since 2009 could justify government's effort to ensure quality in education. Despite all these efforts, however, the country's education system has been under critics for lacking quality. There are empirical studies confirming the deteriorating trends of quality. In this regard, General Education Quality Assurance &Examinations Agency (GEQAEA, 2008), verified the declining trend of students' performance; mainly due to inadequate educational inputs.

Though the country has registered glorious results in access, poor quality of education has been witnessed (World Bank, 2008): That is, based on the National Learning Assessment (NLA), in grades 4 and 8 and other studies, World Bank concluded major problems of the Ethiopian education system to be (i) deteriorating trend of quality in some areas, at least partly as a result of rapid expansion, poor school organization and management; shortage of school supplies, textbooks, curricular and instructional materials, (ii) inadequacy of finance; (iii) managerial incapability of the educational leaders at different echelons to plan, manage and monitor the education process.

Furthermore, reports from MoE (2023) reveal severe suffering of quality in primary schools mainly due to scarcity of resources: For example, nationally only 13.1% of teachers were qualified to the level. The case in South Ethiopian region (where the zone under the study is found) attains only 11.5% of qualified teachers, which is even worse than the national average. Moreover, only 45.1% and 76.9% of principals and supervisors were qualified in the region; and the region lags behind the national average where 54.2% and 83.4% of principals and supervisors were respectively qualified.

Nationally, average textbook-pupil ratio (TPR) for primary is only 3.5, and that of South Ethiopia Region is 3.1; obviously these ratios are much less than the standard (1:1). Section-pupil ratio is 1:55 for the public and 1:31 for the private schools. Facility wise, only 30.4% of primary schools have access to electricity and radios are available in only 34% of primary and middle level schools. Similarly, 40% of the schools have access to water supply and 55.7% of them have functional library. Further, only 46.7% of schools had functional laboratory, 49.6% functional pedagogical center, and 93% of the primary schools own functional toilets.

As far as research gap is concerned, attempts have been made to find studies conducted on the public versus private debate. Access to public versus private comparative studies with particular emphasis to their commitment toward provision of quality education has not been easy. As witnessed by Elizabeth (2020), there has been no parallel study on relationships among inputs, processes, and outputs at all the levels of the education system. However, there were some international and local comparative studies. For instance, Bibi, Aftab and Zaheer (2021) have conducted comparative analysis on public and private schools from perspective of quality education in Pakistan. Similarly, Kalasa, Phiri, and Chitondo (2023) undertook a comparative analysis with emphasis on learner performance in public and private schools in secondary schools in Lusaka, Zambia. Locally, there were too few comparative studies. For example, Yohannes (2005) conducted comparative study in public and private secondary schools and Teshome (2017) conducted a comparative study on public schools and private schools in Ethiopia from perspective of their contribution to national development. Some of these studies focused on secondary level, others were not timely, and even other are out of context of Africa and Ethiopia. To the knowledge of the researcher, no comparative study on public and private primary schools of Gedeo zone was found. Thus, the cur-

rent study has attempted to dwell at primary level, time and setting gaps unlike the mentioned ones. More specifically, the study was conducted with intentions of answering the following basic research questions:

i. How do human, financial and material resource provisions vary between the private and public primary schools in Gedeo Zone?

ii. Is there statistically significant difference between the public and private primary schools in their commitment for ensuring education quality as measured by availability of human, financial and materials inputs?

3 Literature and conceptual framework

This section presents review of related literature pertaining to education quality in general and from public-private perspective in particular. Besides, conceptual framework was developed based on the literature review and presented.

3.1 Conceptualization of quality in education

The quality of education is a notion that cannot be captured through any single definition or approach to understand the term or phenomenon in the light of different viewpoints (Motala, 2001) of policy makers, principals, teachers, parents and students, which consist of the common interest in educational outcomes (Scheerens& Hendriks, 2004). Quality in education is a complex term and multifaceted in nature, and is represented by the different words (Sahito & Vaisanen, 2019). Despite the difficulties, however, professionals, policy makers, academicians, leaders, and researchers relentlessly kept on measuring and improving this apparently obscure concept (Villanueva, 2012). For example, Lomas (2010) provides a heuristic framework to define quality and suggest that quality can be viewed as *excellence*, as *transformative, as fitness for purpose or as value for money*.

3.2 Indicators of Quality Education

Indicators of quality education are elusive to define and have overlapping nature in classification. Rowe and Lievesley (2002) define performance indicators of education as data indices of information by which the functional quality systems may be measured and evaluated: Likewise, Classification of indicators of educational quality differ based on particular criterion one takes into account, policy issues to be analyzed, time and level of education under consideration. Besides, Cameron (2004) adds two indicators that have been put forward by the international community to measure quality that are being used by many international agencies including the World Bank; and these are survival and completion rates. In this regard, Cameron mentioned that survival and completion rates are employed in combination of such calculable results as availed quantifiable inputs like financial resources, teachers, and textbooks, describable processes that be monitored through descriptive indicators, and also cohort flows such as repetition, promotion, and dropout rates. Lastly, Cornali (2012) advocates the CIPP (i.e., Context, Input, Process & Product) model proposed by Stufflebeam as analytical basis for evaluating quality of a give education.

3.3 The Ethiopian education policy frameworks and education quality

Considerable efforts have been underway with emphasis to boosting education system of the country. Specifically, since the endorsement of 1994 Education and training policy, Ethiopia has made significant improvements across the education sector especially on increased enrollment in primary education even though nearly 20% lower than in the rest of low-income countries of Africa (UN, 2015). However, the primary education efficiency (defined here as the percentage of students that enroll in primary school that reach the final year of primary school) remains a significant challenge in Ethiopia (Teklu, 2019).

3.4 The Ethiopian Education Policy Frameworks

The framework of the 1994 Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia developed different strategies and reform tools that sustain equity and access of education to its citizens. Among others, five Education Sector Development Programs (ESDPs) were endorsed since 1996/97 with a long-range rolling

plan focused on the comprehensive development of the education sector over a 20-year period (MoE, 2015): These ESDPs were meant to translate policy statements into action by providing sector-wide implementation framework, which include the five years ESDPs. Above all, these periods were highly remarked with the success in access and equity especially in primary education. Similarly, as evidenced by the aforementioned report of MoE, the first four ESDPs in Ethiopia remarked successful strategy in expanding access and moving primary education towards the goal of universal primary education by 2014/15.

Among others General Education Quality Improvement Program-GEQIP, which constitutes six packages namely: Teacher development program, curriculum improvement, school Improvement, Education planning and management, ICT and civics and ethical education had been launched (MOE, 2010). The development objective of the Program is to improve the quality of general education (Grades 1-12) throughout the country. From the six GEQIP packages, school improvement is more comprehensive packages that promotes good learning environment for students that accesses all educational facilities expected in reducing education wastage and promoting retention rate (MOE, 2010). However, there are still challenges in Ethiopian primary education efficiency. The main reasons for the low completion rates are associated with children dropping out from school and repetition in the same grade. The dropout rate is very high in Ethiopia (MoE, 2013 MoE, 2015). Tasew and Adiam (2015) also confirm that the dropout rate and repetition rate had been exacerbating from 2010 to 2013 at rate of 8% at national level. This finding remarks that primary education wastage is still a challenge against sustainable development goals in Ethiopia.

3.5 Conceptual framework

Conceptual framework is synthesized from the literature reviewed above and partly adapted from the CIPP (Context, input, process & product) Model developed by Stufflebeam; and provides holistic perspective for assessing how much a given education system is committed for provision of quality education as measured by CIPP (Stufflebeam, 2002).. Similarly, in this particular study context aspect is measured by mission, goal and objectives set. The input element evaluates the extent to which human, financial and materials are fulfilled. The process aspect analyzes teaching-learning and leadership. The product aspect examines theoretical knowledge, skill and attitudinal changes brought about.

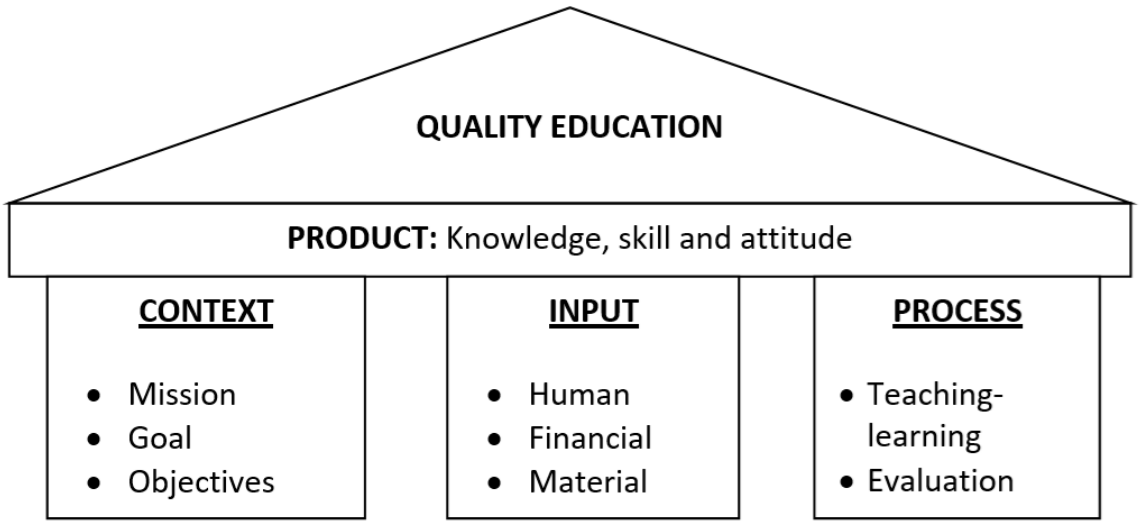

Figure 1: Conceptual framework; adapted from literature and Stufflebeam (2002)

In a nutshell, as depicted in the model in figure 1, development of clear context, inputs availability and relevant process are key pillars of quality education.

4 Research Design and Methods

This section dealt with design and methods. It involved research design, research method, data gathering instruments, and methods of data analysis among others.

4.1 Design and method

Mainly, descriptive design was employed. This is so, because descriptive design is useful for verifying and presenting the detailed picture of the existing situation (Yin, 2003). Besides, the findings were presented in a comparative manner for verifying commitment levels between the public and private primary schools. Moreover, quantitatively slanted mixed method was employed so as to make advantage of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Specifically, concurrent design was used for its efficiency and relevance for gathering both quantitative and qualitative data. This enabled the researchers to make of advantages of the quantitative and qualitative methods in which weakness of one is compensated by strengths of the other Creswell, (2012).

4.2 Sources of data

Relevant data were collected from teaching and non-teaching staff members; namely teachers, principals, librarians, and supervisors; because these subjects are individuals living in the event and context of the issue being studied (Neuman, 2007). Secondary data were also collected from such sources as budget allocation documents and reports. Similarly, observation of school facilities and materials in place has been made with emphases on school buildings, and teaching materials.

4.3 Population and sampling

All public and private primary schools in the sampled Woredas and Town administration of Gedeo Zone, that is, Wonago and Kochore Woredas and also Dilla and Yirgachafe Town administrations, along with their staff, constitute target population. The Woredas and towns were selected based on availability of functional public and private primary schools in the same Woreda and/or towns. Besides, two (one public &one private) primary schools were selected randomly. Totally, eight schools were involved; that is, from two Woredas and two town administrations, four public and four private schools were sampled (i.e., one public and one private schools from the four targeted Woredas and town administrations. Regarding the subjects, a total of 120 participants (72 & 48 respectively from public and private schools) were selected. The lesser proportion of sample from private schools is attributed to the fewer number of staff population. Moreover, teachers in the sampled schools were chosen through simple random sampling technique; just for ensuring sampling fairness (Best & Kahn, 2003). On the other hand principals, libraries, and supervisors were sampled through purposive technique. Such a purposive sampling was employed to involve right participants who have rich data by virtue of their position as supported by scholars like Newman (2007). The sample size of teacher respondents is determined using the following formula as it stated by Yamane (1967), at 95 percent level of confidence as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

4.4 Data gathering instruments

A five point (very high to very low) rating scale questionnaire was employed for gathering data from teachers and supportive or non-teaching staff; altogether 108 respondents. This is so because questionnaire is appropriate for gathering data from larger number of respondents in the shortest time possible (Creswell, 2012). Semi structured interview has been held with four supervisors and eight principals, totally with 12 interviewees; because these are relatively fewer and also individuals with richer data by virtue of their leadership position (Best & Kahn, 2003). The interview has been held with each for about an average 50 minutes in Amharic language to overcome language barrier. Documents such as schools' budget and educational statistical reports), materials assets were analyzed. Besides, statuses of school facilities were observed. Moreover, checklist was utilized for gathering data on staff profile, availability and status of books and

physical facilities.

4.5 Validity and reliability

Before the actual data collection, the instruments were given to three professionals for ensuring content validity. Based on their suggestions, two items were modified and one item was added. Besides, the instruments were pilot tested for verifying reliability. To this end, suggestions of George and Mallery (2003), which provide the following rules of thumb Cronbach's alpha coefficient > 0.9 excellent, > 0.8 Good, > 0.7 acceptable, > 0.6 questionable, > 0.5 poor and < 0.5 unacceptable was adhered to. The average Cronbach reliability coefficient was 0.88, which is good enough for application as discussed above.

4.6 Methods of data analysis

The data were analyzed through both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS software (version23). Specifically, questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive tools such as frequency, means, and standard deviations. Besides, the results were comparatively analyzed using t-test as inferential tool for comparing means of respondents from the two schools categories. Moreover, Eta-Square (η^2) was employed for investigative contributions of variables in yielding differences. Furthermore, p-value of .05 was considered for judging whether or not statistically significant differences prevail. On the other hand, in line with the advice of Yin (2003), qualitative data were transcribed and grouped under the most appropriate theme where each datum belongs and then analyzed through narration.

5 Results and discussion

5.1 Introduction

This section encompasses analyses on three themes, namely manpower input, financial input, and physical & material inputs. One hundred thirty questionnaires were distributed for teachers and supportive staff of the sampled public and private primary schools of Gedeo zone out of which seven were unreciprocated and three were discarded. This makes the return rate about 92.3%. Following data analysis, discussions were made for showing either gaps and/or strengths by comparing results against theoretical bases or literature.

5.2 Manpower input

This subsection deals with comparative analysis of the schools' regarding availability appropriate staff in quantity and quality.

Table 1: Views on manpower input

Group Statistics								
	Items	Sch. Type	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.	Eta-Square (η^2)	
							%	Difference
1	Perception on teachers' qualification as per the national standard	Public Private	4.14 4.06	.54 .76	.61	.54	0.30	Insignificant
2	Agreement to premise that subjects are taught by specialized teachers	Public Private	4.36 4.27	.68 .82	.66	.15	0.37	Insignificant
3	Perception on whether schools are led by professional leaders (qualified in educ leadership)	Public Private	4.28 3.41	.91 1.23	2.24	.01	4.08	Medium
4	Status pertaining to presence of qualified supervisors	Public Private	3.93 3.35	.93 1.41	2.5	.00	5.03	Medium
5	Overall commitment of the school in fulfilling relevant manpower/staff for offering quality	Public Private	3.88 3.47	.77 1.08	2.16	.00	5.13	Medium

As illustrated in Table 1, item 1, the respondents rated the extents of their agreement to the premise that schools are staffed with teachers of appropriate qualification to the grade level as suggested by ministry of education or regional education bureau. Accordingly, an independent-samples t-test yielded

the following statistics. There was no significant difference in scores for public (M=4.14, SD=.54) and private schools [M=4.06, SD=.76; t (118) =.61, p=.54]. Document analysis on qualification of teachers has validated the mystification beyond the opinion. The proportion of degree, diploma and certificate in the schools has been computed. Accordingly, the average teachers' qualification mix for public schools (in %) is 38.40, 59.90 and 1.70% whereas the average qualification composition (in %) is 37.10, 47.50, and 15.40% for private schools. The actual practice in both school types is much less than the national average, which is 81.0% of eligible qualification (MoE, 2023). However, teachers of higher qualification prevail in public schools. The worst of the private, in this regard is availability of about 15% of certificate teachers, where a minimum of diploma is required. In fact, except for those who are not willing to serve in remote rural areas teachers join private schools when they lack employment in public schools. Interviewee 6 is so genuine and uncovered that he joined private school after he missed employment in public school. It could be inferred that education quality in primary schools of the zone has been compromised and so is students' achievement as qualification of teachers plays a significant role in enhancing learners' performance (Rawat, 2023).

As shown in item 2 of the same Table, availability of teachers specialized in subjects was assessed. The independent-samples t-test resulted mean sores of 4.36 and 4.27 for the public and private schools. There was no significant difference in scores for public (M=4.36, SD =.68) and private schools [M=4.27, SD=.68; t (118) =.66, p=.15]. That is, teachers who major in particular subjects they teach were moderately fulfilled in both school categories. However, unlike the opinion based quantitative data, qualitative data on teachers' profile verified that in both school categories over 60% of teachers were below first degree let alone specialization. Similarly, interviewees were sincere and genuinely exposed scarcity of teachers in areas of natural science and English language and other subjects. For example, interviewee1 of public school and interviewee 4 of private school confirm severe shortage of teachers majoring in physics, chemistry and English language. Thus, it could be inferred that students' academic performance has been hampered because of teachers' under qualification, poorer mastery of subject matter and scarcity of teachers, mainly in such subjects as English and natural science. Majoring or specialization in particular subject is deemed to boost teacher's mastery in that particular subject. A number of studies, for instance conducted by Myrberg, Johansson and Rosén (2018) establish positive relationship between teachers' specialization and students' achievement.

Availability of school leaders who are qualified in educational leadership was also assessed, and an independent t-test generated the following results. The mean scores of high and moderate range were identified for the public and privates schooling categories respectively. There was significant difference in scores for public (M =4.28, SD =.91) and private schools [M =3.41, SD =1.23; t (118) =2.24, p =.01]. That is, relatively professional school leaders were available in public schools. The difference in means has moderate/medium effect size of 4.08% contribution to difference in education quality. Besides, almost all the interviewed principals of the public schools are certified in leadership, i.e., EdPM. That is, leaders with better qualification and experience were found in public schools. This might be due to government package of developing school leadership. The role of experienced leaders in school performance is indispensible and supported by empirical studies. For example, as verified by Rawat (2023), the working experience of school leaders is identified to be a key indicator in the promotion of school system and resulting in high completion rate of students.

An independent-samples t-test was conducted for assessing prevalence of qualified supervisors. The mean scores of high for public and moderate ranges for private schools were resulted. There was significant difference in scores for public (M= 3.93, SD =.93) and private schools [M=3.35, SD=1.41; t (118) =2,5, p=.00]. The magnitude of the differences in means has medium effect size, which can have about 5.03% contribution to difference in education quality. The interviewees too rightly verify absence of supervision in the private schools. Specifically, interviewees 6 and 7 lamented of the huge gap between public and private schools as far

as supervisory service is concerned. The better status of supervisors in public schools might be so, because government assigns cluster supervisors for public schools. Contribution of supervision in enhancing students' academic performance is essential as revealed in several studies. As confirmed by Maina and Vera (2016), there is a statistically significant relationship between supervision roles of heads and academic performance of students.

The overall commitment of the schools in fulfilling relevant manpower who would offer quality education was rated. The resulting mean scores were high for the public and moderate for the private schools. There was significant difference in scores for public (M= 3.88, SD =.77) and private schools [M=3.47, SD=1.08; t (118) =2.16, p=.00]. The magnitude of the differences in means has medium effect size, which can have about 5.13% contribution to difference in education quality. That is, public schools were found to be better committed in fulfilling right workforce. Assignment of right workforce on the right position is highly demanded, as human resource has an important role in improving the quality of schools because it makes a good contribution in improving the quality of education (Hadi, Iqbal & Sesmiarni; 2023).

To sum up, although higher mean scores were observed for the public schools, there were no statistically significant difference between the public and private primary schools of Gedeo Zone regarding availability of qualified teachers, teaching subjects by specialized teachers, experience of school leaders and availability of qualified supportive staff. However, there were significant differences between the two school types with prevalence of better qualified educational leaders, supervisors and higher commitment of public schools for staffing their school with relevant manpower and thereby provision of quality education. Overall, statistically significant difference between the two school types is found as far as manpower input is concerned.

5.3 Financial input

This subsection is aimed at analyzing of financial inputs in the public and private primary schools under consideration. To this end, major emphasis is made on adequacy of educational budget, remuneration and fairness among others.

Table 2: Views on financial input

Group Statistics								
	Items	Sch. Type	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.	η^2	
							%	Difference
1	Allocation of adequate budget	Public	3.57	1.02	.36	.88	0.11	Insignificant
		Private	3.50	1.07				
2	Whether the school pays rational salary in line with staff's qualification & service	Public	3.46	.99	-1.3	.23	1.4	Insignificant
		Private	3.24	.97				
3	Whether schools allocate appropriate budget for research, training and development	Public	2.71	1.23	. 95	.30	0.76	Insignificant
		Private	2.50	1.09				
4	Overall commitment in allocating budget which enables to provide quality education.	Public	3.49	1.04	.57	.97	0.27	Insignificant
		Private	3.38	1.04				

Firstly, an assessment was made on whether the schools allocate adequate educational budget. An independent samples t-test was conducted and yielded mean scores of moderate level for both school types, and also absence of significant difference in scores for public (M =3.57, SD =1.02) and private schools [M =3.50, SD =1.07; t (118) =-.36, p =.88]. As computed from document analysis, average annual non-salary budget per students in public schools is about 62.69 ETB where it is about 40.80 birr in the private schools. This could hint better practice of budget allocation to prevail in public schools, which might have been caused due to block & school grants besides government budget. The interviewees in both school categories revealed their concerns about the meager financial input.

For instance, interviewee 4 from public schools and interviewee6 from private school briefed their worries. Here is what interviewee4 had to say ". . . for your surprise, we are getting 5000 Eth Birr block grant in a semester for more than 1400 students' what can be purchased for this?". Similarly, interviwee6 lamented of the total absence of such grants. Respondent to open ended item clearly mentioned two causes for scarcity of financial inputs in private schools: absence of block grant and owners' insatiable aspiration for profit by implementing economical course of action. The synthesis of quantitative and qualitative data verified insufficiency of financial resource in both schooling categories. It would be easy to infer that education quality has been suffering as a result of meager financial input in both school types. School funds are well used to avail enough teaching aids, to hire qualified teachers, and to train/develop teachers, etc; and all these activities can lead to improved students' outcomes (Nizeyimana, *et al*. 2023).

Secondly, an assessment was made with emphasis on whether the schools pay rational salary commensurate to staff's qualification & service. The mean scores for both school categories fell in the moderate interval. There was no significant difference in scores for public (M=3.46, SD=.99) and private schools [M=3.24, SD=.97; t (118) =-1.3, p=.23]. As computed from document analysis, average salary for holders of first degree, diploma and certificate teachers were found to be 8854, 6106 and 3340 ETB in public schools and 5036, 3943 and 3592 ETB in the private schools. Here is what interviewee8 had to respond quoting his own example: private school is not my priority; I'm serving in this private school even at lesser pay, just for rescuing myself from hardship of serving in periphery of public school. Both questionnaire and document analysis evidently verified prevalence of better pay in public schools. Even the issue of fairness against weekly load has been neglected. Average weekly teaching load for public schools is 21.5 periods and 26 periods for private schools respectively for the aforementioned salary ranges. The worst is the highest working hours a day in private schools (7 hrs average) unlike the single shift (4hrs average) in public schools. Such a huge variation in pay can be pushing factor for experienced teachers to leave. In fact, as rightly put by inerviewee 7, from private school, often teachers leave the school anytime without awareness and schools' readiness for replacement. Difficult working conditions may drive much of the difference in teachers' turnover and also salary variation can have impact on retention of teachers of better qualification and experience; and thereby significant impact on students' achievement. (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007). That is, pay and related injustices, accompanied by other working conditions exacerbate teachers' turnover and this in turn would undoubtedly affects education quality.

As depicted in Table 2, third item, an assessment was made on whether the schools allocates adequate budget for research, training and development. To this end, independent samples t-test was conducted and resulted in mean scores of moderate range for both schools types. There was no significant difference in scores for public (M=2.71, SD=1.23) and private schools [M=2.50, SD=1.09; t (118) = .95, p=.30]. Interviewees 3 and 4 from public schools, verified presence of government sponsored training and development (career development) opportunities; however, school level short term trainings are nearly non-existent. As claimed by interviewee 6 and7, the situation is even worse in private schools as training & development itself is scant, let alone the budget. Thus, it would be concluded that except for government sponsored short term and career development opportunities in public schools by which public schools outperform, both school types undermined the role of training and development. However, human resource development plays a critical role in ensuring the delivery of quality education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. In this regard, Abosede (2015) identified a strong relationship between and quality of personnel and school outcomes.

Lastly, the schools' overall commitment pertaining to allocation of financial resource toward ensuring education quality was compared. Accordingly, independent samples t-test was conducted, and there was no significant difference in scores for public (M=3.49, SD=1.04) and private schools [M=3.30, SD=1.04; t (118) =.57, p=.97]. The magnitude of the differences in the means was very small (percentage of η^2 = 0.27%). The findings indicate

that both school types are moderately committed for allocating budget which would enable them to provide quality education; even though public schools seem to be a bit better committed with very small variation. The lower practice of financial resource allocation might be attributed to the profit seeking goal of private schools, which they often reimburse through of utilization of teachers to the fullest; indeed exploitation. Failure to allocate adequate budget on education, particularly on teachers can have adverse effect on schools' effectiveness. Spending on teachers (which accounts for 50-80% of education spending) is billed in boosting teaching effectiveness (World Bank, 2023).

In a nutshell, the mean scores were a bit higher for public schools as far as budget allocation for recurrent cost, budget for research, training & development and the overall commitment pertaining to budgetary matters. However, in both schoolings allocation of only moderate level of financial resources has been verified. Overall, here is no statistically significant difference between the two school types as far as financial input is concerned.

5.4 Physical and material inputs

This subsection dealt with analyses of data on physical and material inputs in the schools under consideration. It includes analyses of empirical data regarding quantity and quality of buildings, sport fields, toilet, electricity, pipe water, library service, textbooks, teaching aids and the likes.

Table 3: Views on physical and material inputs

Group Statistics								
	Items	Sch. Type	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.	η^2	
							%	Difference
1	Adequacy and quality of the school buildings	Public Private	3.57 3.31	1.12 .93	.1.31	.10	1.43	Insignificant
2	Adequacy of functional sport fields	Public Private	3.01 3.02	1.22 1.18	-.30	.51	0.07	Insignificant
3	Availability of toilets for staff and students	Public Private	3.67 3.83	1.20 1.10	-.77	.40	0.50	Insignificant
4	Presence of electricity installed to every room	Public Private	3.39 3.04	1.22 1.35	1.47	.54	0.25	Insignificant
5	Prevalence of functional pipe water	Public Private	3.33 3.02	1.31 1.26	1.3	.17	0.02	Insignificant
6	Provision of textbooks for students in all subjects	Public Private	2.40 2.81	1.23 1.32	-1.74	.83	2.50	Insignificant
7	Availability of library and reference books	Public Private	3.19 3.29	1.13 1.07	-.47	.47	0.19	Insignificant
8	Provision of teaching aids /media	Public Private	3.31 3.29	.99 .90	.08	.44	0.04	Insignificant

As illustrated in Table 3 first item, an independent samples t-test was conducted for assessing status (quantity & quality) of school buildings. The resulting mean scores for public schools and private schools were respectively high and medium. There was no significant difference in scores for public (M=3.57, SD=1.12) and private schools [M=3.31, SD=.93; t (118) =1.31, p=.10]. Majority of the public schools' buildings are made of bricks and only few were made of bricks & wood and rooms have average area is 45.5 m2 where as those of private schools are made of bricks, wood & bricks and wood combined and of about 36.07m2 area on average. That is, buildings are adequately prevalent in public primary schools than are in private schools' that is, public schools were known for larger compound and classrooms whereas private schools seem to have narrow compound and class-

rooms. Nevertheless, both school categories own a number of buildings made of wood and mud, which is far below the standard. Both schooling types undermined the role of comfy environment, buildings, class size, etc in quality of instruction. According to Asiyai (2012), school facilities are essential for sound education; and process of teaching, learning is affected by status of physical facilities such as size and quality of school buildings, classrooms, provision of furniture, and other physical inputs. In fact, plentiful studies have found gaps of about 5-17 percentile achievement variation among students in poor and in standard buildings (Earthman, 2002).

Secondly, an independent samples t-test was conducted for assessing availability and status of sport fields. The mean scores of moderate range were identified for both schools under study. There was no significant difference in scores for public (M=3.01, SD=1.22) and private schools [M=3.02, SD=1.18; t (118) = -.30, p=.51]. Sadly, observation checklist data confirm that only football field is functional in both, while others sport fields are either partly or totally non-functional. The worst result in private schools is commonness of diminutive school compound let alone the sport fields. The results affirm that both school types lack functional sport fields; almost none is better than the other.

Thirdly, an independent samples t-test was conducted for assessing status and availability of separate of toilets for staff and students for both males and females. The resulting mean scores were found to be high for both school categories. There was no significant difference in scores for public (M=3.67, SD=1.20) and private schools [M=3.83, SD = 1.10; t (118) = -.77, p=.40]. However, document analysis affirms that there are toilets for students and teachers of both sexes. Nevertheless, toilets vary in average areas/size, i.e., 30m2 in public schools and 5.76 m2 in the private schools. Indeed, there is no exception to the Zone under investigation in this regard. Nationally, 92.5% of primary schools have functional toilets for students and 69% of them have functional teachers' toilets (MoE, 2023). Despite variations in adequacy and quality, both school categories own toilets both for students and teachers and also for both male and female groups. This is quite pleasing that the schools are doing in line with suggestions of scholars like Akomolafe and Adesua (2016) who denote the positive roles of school facilities such as toilet, laboratories, recreational equipments, and so forth.

The status of electric service in the schools was assessed using independent samples t-test. The mean scores of moderate intervals were identified for both schooling types. There was no significant difference in scores for public (M=3.39, SD=1.22) and private schools [M=3.04, SD=1.35; t (118) =1.47, p=.54]. The moderate rating of the mean scores reveal absence of electric power installed to the entire rooms. The problem of electricity is severe nationally; particularly in rural primary schools. Nationally, only 27.7% of Primary and Middle schools have access to electricity (MoE, 2023).

As depicted in Table3, fifth item was meant for assessing status of water service in the schools. To this end, independent samples t-test was conducted and mean scores of moderate range were identified for both school categories. There was no significant difference in scores for public (M=3.33, SD=1.21) and private schools [M=3.02, SD=1.26; t (118) =1.30, p=.17]. The respondents were neutral to the premise about availability of pipe water. The fact that availability of clean/pipe water was rated only moderate could affirm absence of water service in some schools. The scarcity of pipe water cannot be surprising; even nationally only 36.2% of the primary schools have access to functional water supply (MoE, 2023).

Moreover, an independent samples t-test was conducted for rating respondents' level of agreement to availability of textbooks in all subjects to every student (in 1:1 ratio). The mean score for the public schools fell in the range of low, whereas that of the private schools fell in the moderate interval. There was no significant difference in scores for public (M=2.40, SD=1.23) and private schools [M=2.81, SD=1.32; t (118) =-1.74, p=.83]. Quantitative data portray better commitment of private schools regarding provision of textbooks for ensuring education quality. However, document analysis verifies that average student-textbook ratio is about 1:4 in public schools and over 1:5 in the private schools. The blended result of both quantitative and qualita-

tive data fittingly verifies scarcity of textbooks in both schooling categories. Undeniably, availability of textbooks in both schoolings is below national average, which is 1:3.5 at primary level (MoE, 2023). Even, it could be seen that the average national textbook-pupil ratio/TPR (1:3.5) is much less than the standard, which is 1:1. Certainly, quality has been compromised both nationally and in Gedeo Zone public and primary schools as well. Sadly, this is against results of several empirical studies (Attakumah & Tulasi, 2015), which corroborate existence of strong positive correlation between availability of textbook and academic achievement.

Further, an independent samples t-test was conducted for rating views on availability of library and updated reference books. The mean scores for both schooling types were identified to be moderate. There was no significant difference in scores for public (M=3.29, SD=1.07) and private schools [M=3.31, SD=.99; t (118) = -.47, p=.47]. Document analysis shows that in both school types, prevalence of reference books is rated good and moderate. It would be inferred that none of the schooling outperforms than the other as far as the status of library and reference books are concerned. Even nationally, only 39.2% of primary schools have functional libraries (MoE, 2023), and shortage of reference books is expected problem, which might have been hampering education quality in the Gedeo Zone.

Finally, as indicated in Table3, the last item, an independent samples t-test was conducted for assessing provision of appropriate teaching aids (e.g., science kit). Accordingly, moderately rated mean scores were resulted both for the public and private schools. There was no significant difference in scores for public (M=3.31, SD=.99) and private schools [M=3.29, SD=.90; t (118) = -.08, p=.44]. Observation checklist indicates that there were science kits in both school types; yet, this cannot be guarantee that teachers are supporting teaching with science kit. Besides, the so claimed pedagogical centers in both school categories were overwhelmed with teacher made charts and pictures. The severity of such a scarcity of teaching media has been naturalized obstruction against education quality is schools of the country; as only 11% of primary schools of the country own functional laboratory and 41.4% of them have pedagogical center (MoE, 2023). The pupils are derived of their opportunity of making advantage of media in teaching-learning process advocated by international organizations. For example, according to UNESCO (2005) teaching inputs such as books, audio-visual, educational technology, etc are the most determining factors of quality education.

Generally, provision of physical and material resources in both school types could not exceed moderate rating; and there is no statistically significant difference between the two school types as far as materials input is concerned. However, the overall comparison revealed that public schools seem to be a bit better committed regarding possession of physical and provision of material inputs. Specifically, the public schools were found to surpass with regard to quantity and quality of buildings, electricity, water services and teaching aids. However, better commitment was verified in private schools concerning availability of better toilets, provision of educational materials, and textbooks. Equity, according to the Center for Public Education (2016), is achieved in education when all students receive the resources, and policymakers aim to ensure an equal and fair distribution of the resources (Barrett, *et al.*, 2019).

6 Discussion

Human, financial, materials, time and information are resources required by organizations for discharging functions. Above all, human resource is the most determinant success factor since humans control other resources. This particular study identified existence of teachers, school leaders and supervisors of better qualification and experience; yet, in both school categories ineligible workforces were found serving pupils, who would pay for the mess the sooner or later. The role of qualified, experienced and professional staff in booting education quality has been confirmed by scholars in the field of education. For example, according to Rawat (2023), teachers' qualification and content mastery play a significant role in improvement of academic performance of students, and experience of school leaders is key indicator in the promotion

of school system and resulting in a high level of students' completion. Besides, as confirmed by Maina and Vera (2016), there is a statistically significant relationship between supervision roles of heads and academic performance of students.

Besides manpower, finance is among the most decisive inputs in organizations. Despite tiny surpass in public schools, scarcity of financial input was verified in both schooling categories. The scarcity of financial input in private schools could not be surprising; because profit is their ultimate goal and they are denied special support such as school grants and block grants, which public schools are entitled to secure. Finance in organizations, is analogous to life blood in organisms. Hiring quality workforce, training and retaining them, availing enough teaching aids/media/technology, educational materials & facilities, etc, entail allocation of sound financial input (Nizeyimana, *et al*., 2023). Indeed, strong correlate between school outcomes and quality of personnel has been identified (Abosede, 2015) and particularly, spending on teachers is payable in getting more value in boosting teaching effectiveness (World Bank, 2023); the reverse would be true with scarcity.

The third input against which the public and private primary schools were compared was availability of physical and material resources. Both school categories own a number of buildings made of wood and mud (i.e., below the standard), moderately rated toilets, electricity, and water services. Both schools could be blamed for severe shortage of textbooks and reference books and for almost total absence of laboratory, pedagogical centers and teaching media or technology; although these are compulsory. According to Asiyai (2012), school facilities and materials (e.g., buildings, classrooms, toilets, electricity, water, books, audio-visuals, educational technology, etc) are vital for provision of quality education. Studies affirm that about 5-17% achievement difference among students is attributed to variation in school facilities and materials (Earthman, 2002); and these must be among rationales why international organizations like UNESCO (2005) stress provision of such facilities and materials to be compulsory. Scarcity and disparity in educational facilities and materials not only hampers education quality, but also refute adage of equity. Equity, according to the Center for Public Education (2016), is achieved in education when all students receive the resources, and policymakers aim to ensure an equal and fair distribution of the resources (Barrett, Treves, Shmis, Ambasz & Ustinova, 2019).

Conclusion and implications

Based on major findings, the following conclusion could be drawn. Both the public and private primary schools were found making minimal efforts for ensuring education quality. However, considerably significant weaknesses were identified in both. Specifically, public primary schools of Gedeo zone were found to be better committed in investing on manpower, financial inputs and provision of educational facilities. Despite government assistance for increased staffing, public schools do not fully dedicate themselves to the teaching-learning process. On the other hand, private schools are motivated by competition and profit. Accordingly education quality suffers from financial limits, particularly in smaller towns; despite excelling in instructional process and material resource. Overall, education quality in the zone is hindered by a lack of sufficient human, financial, and material resources in both school types. This emphasizes how urgently the zonal education bureau, school administrators, teachers, parents, and the community need to work together. To guarantee fair and competitive educational results, emphasis should be placed on enhancing the teaching-learning process in public schools and resolving resource shortages in the private ones.

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Ethical issues

First and foremost, the authors secured ethical clearance before gathering the data. Besides, the schools and participants were informed about the purpose of the study and asked for permission and willingness to take part in the study. Moreover, the authors duly ensured ethical principles pertaining to anonymity of the schools and participants while reporting the results.

Declaration of Competing Interests

Regarding the publishing of this paper, the authors affirm that there are no conflicts of interest.

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