academic**Journals**

Educational Research and Reviews

Full Length Research Paper

Challenges students' face in their transition from primary to secondary school and the interventions schools take to ease the transition

Wudu Melese Tarekegne

Jimma University, College of Education and Behavioral Science, Department of Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies, Ethiopia.

This study explores the major challenges that affect students' enrollment and participation and the key measures schools take to mitigate the challenge and help students continue their education. The data were collected from 23 secondary school grade nine students in Amahara Regional State in Ethiopia using the structured questionnaires from students and teachers as well as by using semi-structured interview from school principals. The results suggest that the major challenges were family related (opportunity cost of students, family issue such as parental conflict, taking care of family members) factors and associated with individual characteristics of students (disability, illness) are prominent ones. The study also made clear that though the effect size is very small, there is a statistically significant difference between urban and rural students in the reasons for their drop out from school. This study also highlights that schools do not facilitate conditions for poor children to be supported by NGOs or exempt them from school fees. They also do not provide food and health services for poor children. In addition, schools have no guidance and counseling or social worker who can support students when they face problems in schools. Moreover, though schools have no corporal punishment policies and procedures, schools implement other punishment techniques such as to miss class if they arrive late.

Key words: Challenges, transition, intervention, primary school, secondary school.

INTRODUCTION

The contribution of education towards economic development has been well recognized; as a result, developing countries and international agencies have started focusing on human investment. The role of education to economic growth has been found to be positive and significant not only in monetary terms but also in physical terms, such as farm efficiency and labor productivity. Education has also been found to be a significant factor in the reduction of poverty, improvement in income distribution and various dimensions of social, demographic, and political development (Wood and Psachropoulos, 1995).

E-mail: wudumelese@gmail.com. Tel: +251-913 999 181.

Considering education to be a tool of paramount importance for mobilization of human resources for sustainable socio-economic growth, the governments have been involved in formulating and implementing numerous policies to develop and improve the education system in order to make it compatible with requirements of the country. As a result, an increase in primary enrollment has always been a priority for every successive government. It has been a debatable issue in every era and relevant measures have been proposed and implemented, during every regime. It is a major issue in most of the developing nations (UNESCO, 2005).

Generally, no one would doubt that education is the major vehicle to development and the remedy for people's problems. It is widely accepted that all children should receive at least primary education if human labor is to yield sustainability in the development of a country. However, there are many hindrances to popular participation at all levels of education.

Mbewe and Nampota (2007) studied the determinants of school enrollment in Malawi and found out that cost of schooling and family background characteristics such as mother's education, urban rural residence and proportion of girls among household's children are major barriers of school enrollment and participation.

A similar study made on the demand for primary schooling in rural Mali found that, school fees, distance to school, and school quality measured by student teacher ratio, number of books per classroom as barriers to enrollment and participation (Laugharn, 2007).

Likewise, in Ethiopian context a research report for the USAID (1993) provides a comprehensive study on the demand for schooling in rural Ethiopia. The study found out that economic constraints represented the most silent impediment to participation and persistent in primary school in rural areas.

A researcher such as Schaffner (2004)'s report undoubtedly provides the most comprehensive study on demand for schooling in Ethiopia. The result shows that the most determinant to enrollment are boys and girls labor force for activities, distance, failure, inability to offer and low quality of education.

In general, research findings show that though there are barriers of enrollment and participation at all levels of education, there are also mostly unnoticed barriers that students face when they transit from one educational level to another; for instance from primary to secondary school (Howard and Johnson, 2004)).

Research studies by Hargreaves et al. (1996) on barriers that encountered students' during their transition from primary and high school include problems of truancy, school failure, non-compliance and inappropriate behavior. These barriers in the early years of high school can often be attributed to the radical changes that occur in students' day-to-day lives as they make the move from one school to the next. It is argued that, in addition to the obvious changes that children experience in relation to

such things as school size, the number of teachers and the range of new subjects, the move from primary to secondary school also involves a transition between two radically different cultures of schooling. On the one hand, the primary school culture emphasizes care and nurturance of students and offers a sense of belonging to a human-sized group. On the other hand, the culture of the secondary school is oriented towards teaching academic subjects; it emphasizes differentiation of students according to achievement and produces experiences of fragmentation and isolation rather than cohesion and bonding. The effects of changes such as these for individual students can be anxiety, confusion, lack of stability and subsequently alienation and disengagement.

Several reasons have been stated for the barriers of school enrollment and participation in Ethiopia as well as in other developing countries. However, empirical studies related to the barriers of school enrollment and participation that students face during their transition from primary to secondary education and mechanisms that schools take to alleviate those barriers in Ethiopia are quite limited. Therefore, investigating the major barriers of enrollment and participation in their transition from primary to secondary school and some intervention measures that schools take is of some importance.

Research questions

The major purpose of this paper is to investigate the barriers of school enrollment and participation when students transit from primary to secondary education and the main interventions measures schools take to ease the smooth transition and increase enrollment and participation. To achieve the above purpose the following research questions were formulated. These are:

1. What are the major barriers that affect students' enrollment and participation when they transit from primary to secondary education
2. Is there any statistically significant difference in barriers between urban and rural students?
3. What are the key measures schools take to reduce the barriers and ease students' transition?

Context and school legislation

This study was conducted in the selected secondary schools of Ethiopia. In Ethiopia the education system is divided into primary education which is compulsory education (grades 1-8). It has two cycles: the first cycle is basic education (grade 1-4) and second cycle is general primary education (grade 5-8). On the other hand, the secondary school (grades 9-12) has also two cycles: the first cycle (grade 9-10) is a general secondary education

and the second cycle (grade 11-12) is preparatory education.

In Ethiopia, education is free at the primary and secondary level. Regarding the medium of instruction at primary schools, different local languages are used but at the secondary school and at higher education, English is used as a medium of instruction. At primary schools subjects taught are more of general fields or broad areas whereas at secondary schools subjects taught are discrete subjects (TGE, 1994).

Concerning educational legislation, Ethiopia has ratified major international and human rights agreements adopted by the United Nations and other international organizations. It endorsed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1991. In 2002, it also approved the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), adopted by the Assembly of Heads of States of the Organization of African Unity, which accepted the need to act decisively to encourage and defend the rights and welfare of the African children (MOLSA, 2006).

In Ethiopia, there are laws and policy documents regarding the right to education. Some of these policy instruments are included in the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia: the Proclamation to Define the Powers and Duties of the Central and Regional Executive Organs of the Transitional Government (Proc. No. 41) in February 1993; the Education and Training Policy/ETP of 1994; the Education Sector Strategy/ESS of 1994; and the Education Sector Development Program ESDP I-IV (MOE, 2010).

Accordingly, the Government of Ethiopia introduced a series of educational policies and strategies between 1994 and 2006. Most of them were focused on increasing access to education at all levels but with a special focus on the expansion of primary education. Most of the policy documents also speak about ensuring both access to and the quality of education throughout the country; although in practice the quality issue has remained a challenge (MOE, 2010).

METHODOLOGY

The research design

The research design used for this study was survey research design. The survey research design is appropriate for this study because it allows collection of data from a larger number of people than is generally possible when using other method (Mertens, 1998; Best and Kahn, 2005; Kerlinger, 1986). In addition it is used to generalize from sample to a population so that inferences can be made about some characteristics, attitudes or behavior of the population. Moreover, in practice collecting data from the whole population is impractical, costly, and lengthy; thus survey study saves time and money (Bailey, 1994). Particularly, the cross sectional survey research design was used. Since cross-sectional design involves examining the effect of several groups at one point in time. This research design was used because it is economical

and helps to collect information in a shorter time frame (Cohen et al., 2007).

Sample and sampling technique

The population of this study is all secondary school students of Ethiopia. From the total regional states of the country one regional state was selected as sample region due to logistic reasons; then from this region two zones and again from each zone five woredas (districts) were selected by simple random sampling. Finally, from each woreda (district) all secondary schools are taken as sample schools and from each school all grade 9th students a total of 3080 students are taken as sample of the study.

In addition to the students sample school principals (23 principals) are taken through availability sampling and 24 school teachers in each school; a total of 545 teachers are taken as sample of the study by using simple random sampling techniques.

Instruments of data collection

The instruments used for data collection in this study were questionnaires. These instruments were developed in such a way that they maximize the possibility of generating answers to the basic research questions.

Questionnaire: - To collect data from the sample students, teachers, and school principals close ended type questionnaires were prepared based on the review of literature for this study. The self administered questionnaires are appropriate for this study since the person administering the instrument has an opportunity to establish a rapport, explain the purpose of the study and explain the meaning of items that may not be clear (Best and Kahn, 2005).

The questionnaires focus on the leading questions such as the major barriers that affect students' enrollment and participation during transition and the key measures schools take to reduce the barriers and ease students' transition.

Reliability and validity of Instruments

After preparing the instruments of data collection validation of the instruments was done using experts' review and discussion. Here some irrelevant items were discarded and some ambiguous items were modified as per the comments given by the expert. And then the issue of reliability was addressed by pilot testing of the instruments in one secondary school located in the same region and the school was excluded from the actual data collection. Then the reliability coefficient of the instrument was calculated to be .82) which is regarded as strong correlation coefficient by Jackson (2009). Then the final instruments were administered to all sample students, teachers, and principals by the researcher and enough time was given for them to fill and return them.

Data analysis

The survey data that were collected from teachers, school principal, and students were organized and analyzed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, mainly frequency, percentages, mean and standard deviations were used to point out some major barriers that affect students during transition as well as some measures schools take to reduce such barriers. Moreover, to see whether there is a difference in barriers between urban and rural students or not Chi-square test was used. Finally, the relevant data collected for this study were systematically organized and summaries were presented using tables and figures

Table 1. Most common reasons for students' absence/ drop out/ from school.

Reasons	Response		Rank
	#	%	order
Fees too expensive	30	0.97	10
Books and/or other supplies too expensive	22	0.71	12
Shoes/clothes/uniform for school too expensive	10	0.32	13
Transport too expensive	6	0.19	14
School too far from home	76	2.46	8
Not safe to travel to school	6	0.19	14
Lack of transport	2	0.06	16
Truancy, child does not want to go, not interested	296	9.61	3
Banned from school for behavior reasons	10	0.32	13
Banned from school due to failure	2	0.06	16
Quality of education at school (teaching and learning) poor	4	0.12	15
No sanitation facilities at school	2	0.06	16
Bullying/abuse from peers	10	0.32	13
No need for schooling for future job	2	0.06	16
Need to learn a trade/skill so went to work	28	0.90	11
Need to stay home to look after siblings	166	5.38	6
Needed for domestic and/or agricultural work at home	1080	35.06	1
Have to do paid work to earn money	102	3.31	7
It's not appropriate for girls to go to/continue at school	2	0.06	16
Marriage	2	0.06	16
Disability, illness	718	23.31	2
Family member ill/disabled/elderly	178	5.77	5
Family issues (parent disputes/marital conflict)	282	9.15	4
Stigma and discrimination	10	0.32	13
School not accessible for seasonal reasons: river prohibits	34	1.10	9
Total	3080	100	

as deemed necessary.

MAJOR FINDINGS

The key findings of this study are presented in three sections. The first section addresses the major barriers students' face in their transition while the second section discusses the main measures schools take to ease their transition. The final section investigates whether there is any difference between urban and rural in major barriers or not. Thus, the presentation follows the sequence of the research question formulated at the introduction part.

The major challenges students face during transition

Problems that make students to be absent from school or totally drop out from school emanate from different sources. Generally, it may come from individual student characteristics and institutional characteristics (which are associated with family, school, and community). The sample teachers were asked to mention the major challenges that lead students to be absent or drop out from school and the result is presented in Table 1.

As it can be seen from the table, six major factors are identified as common barriers of students' enrollment and participation. According to the questionnaires, the most common reasons for drop out were the need for domestic and agricultural work at home (including chores, farm work, harvest, 35.06%; scores = 1080; rank=1). The other frequently reported reasons in order of frequency are disability, illness (23.31%) (Scores =718, rank =2); truancy child does not want to go, not interested (9.61%), (scores =296, rank =3); family issues example problems at home, parent disputes/marital conflict (9.15%), (scores =282, rank = 4); family member ill/disability/elderly (including care for this family member), and the sixth
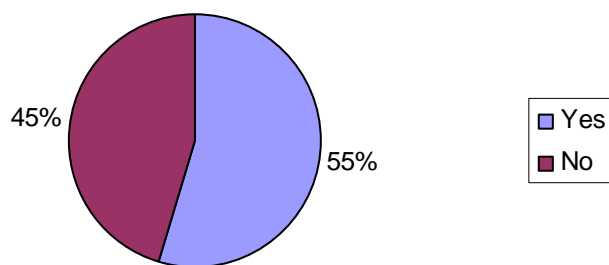
Figure 1. Children sponsored by NGO in school.

Table 2. Does the school give exemptions from paying fees? (n= 23).

Options	Response	
	#	%
Yes	11	46.08
No	12	53.92
Total	23	100

factor is the need to stay home to look after other siblings.

From the above result one can understand of all the categories of factors that make students to be absent/drop out from school are the family related factors particularly the opportunity cost that the parents need from students. The second major factor is related to individual characteristics of students, which is related to disability and illness, truancy (children not wanting to go to school).

Measures schools take to ease students' transition

In this part of the data presentation, the main measures that schools take to ease students' transition from primary to secondary school are presented. Particularly measures related to financial and school supply support, provision of food and health services, having school counselors and establishing clubs, adjusting school regulations and providing extra tutorials for students.

Financial and school supply support

Research findings continuously reveal that one of the main reasons for low students' enrollment and participation in developing countries is the cost of education in terms of cost of educational materials such as cost of books, uniforms, transportation and opportunity costs.

As a result, to boost students' enrolment and participation at all level particularly during students' transition schools should design a mechanism of resolving this problem. The solution may lay on two approaches either

they provide financial and school supplies by themselves if they can, or they may find a non-governmental organization (NGO) who can provide support for students so as to reduce students' drop out from school.

Accordingly, data were collected from all 23-sample schools to see to what extent schools provide such support for the students; the result is presented in Figure 1.

As it is shown in the figure slightly above half (54.86%) of the school principals confirmed that there are students in their school who are supported by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Non-government sponsorship is provided directly to individual households to support the schooling of particular children. NGO grants are provided at the school level to both support children and provide other resources / activities such as equipment or food at break times. These NGOs may pay their school fees, buy them uniform or textbooks or pay an amount for children's living expense. But, 45% of the respondents replied that there are no children in their school who are supported by non-governmental organizations.

The second approach to help poor students is that schools can help them by waving out the payment that students pay for the school to encourage them not to drop out from school. Table 2 shows the summary of this result.

As it is mentioned above one of the measures schools take to help students and reduce students drop out from school due to financial problem is giving exemptions from paying fees or grants in cash or kind to poor children. Sample school principals were asked to what extent they exempt fee or grant in cash for students who are poor and their response in Table 2 shows that most of them (53.92%) did not support students in that way. While some (46.08%) replied that, they try to support poor students by exempting them from paying school fees or giving grant either in cash or in kind.

This result shows that schools are not willing to support poor children or they consider supporting poor children is not the responsibility of the school rather it is the responsibility of the other agencies such as non-governmental organizations.

Providing food and health services

To actively participate and learn student should get adequate food and good health services since malnourished and unhealthy children may not properly attend school and learn well. In order to assess the number of sample schools who provide food services in schools without requiring any payment, the principals were asked through the questionnaires and the result depicts that the great majority of the schools 21(91.5%) do not give food service for the students. Thus, students who are poor and cannot afford to buy food are unable to attend school; as a result they may be absent or drop out from school. A very few number of schools 2(8.85%) replied that they provide food for the students.
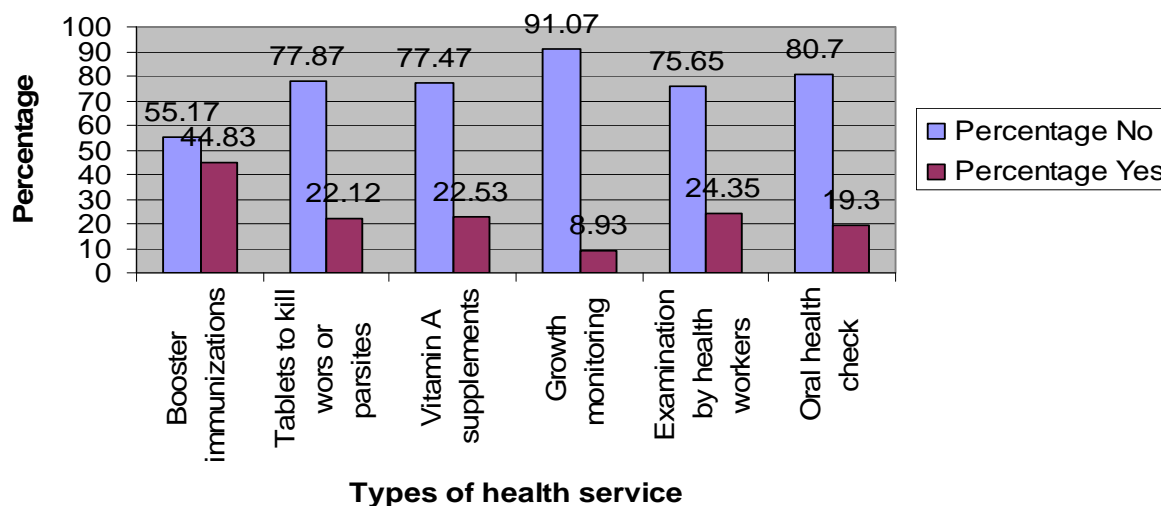
Figure 2. Health service provided for the students.

Table 3. Schools provide food for children without requiring payment.

Option	Response	
	#	**%**
Yes	2	8.85
No	21	91.15
Total	23	100
Frequency per day or per shift		
One times	2	100
Two times	-	-
Three times	-	-
Total	2	100

Even though they are small in number, those respondents who replied that they give food for students were asked about the frequency they offer food to the students per day or per shift and all of them reported that they provide once (Table 3). From the above result one can understand that the schools can not support poor children from being absent /drop out of school due to lack of food.

Health of the students is one of the great challenges in developing countries. This affects students' enrollment and participation in schools. Thus, to enhance students' enrollment and participation at all levels the schools should provide basic health services at the school level. In order to see to what extent do sample schools offer the basic health services the principals were asked; the result is presented Figure 2.

As it is seen in the figure, the basic health services, which are assumed available in the school, were listed and respondents were asked to say yes or no on the services provided in their school. The results show that generally three –forth of the respondent principals confirmed that the identified services are not given in their schools. It is to say that the principals reported that the schools did not offer booster immunizations (extends the life of existing immunizations) (55.17%), tablets to kill worms or parasites which have infected children (77.87%), Vitamin A supplements (77.47%), growth monitoring (91.07%), examination by health worker so that childhood diseases can be detected (75.65%), and oral health check (80.7%).

Having school counselor and establishing clubs

Students at different level particularly at the transition level may face many challenges in their education carrier. All stakeholders on children's education should participate to solve students' problems; yet the schools next to family are the most responsible institution to help students.

Schools through various measures are expected to support students. One of the mechanisms is by assigning schools guidance and counselor or social workers who are responsible for guiding students, solve their problem, and facilitate students' smooth transition. School counseling service helps students who are at the transition from primary to secondary school resolve emotional, social or behavioral problems and help them to smoothly transit to secondary school. The other way is by establishing extracurricular clubs and through it, schools can identify students' problem, follow up, and render appropriate support to them. This is because students' participation in extracurricular activities helps to develop more positive attitudes of school and lower probability of school dropout. As a result, respondent sample school principals were asked about it; the result is summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Does the school have a counselor? (n=23).

Option	Response	
	#	%
Yes	10	43.47
No	13	56.52
Total	23	100

Table 5. Schools have a club for children (n=23).

Option	Response	
	#	%
Yes	15	65.51
No	8	34.78
Total	23	100

Table 4 reveals that most (56.52%) of the principals assert that their schools do not have either guidance and counselor, social worker or teacher who provides counseling service to students and is responsible for looking after their psychosocial wellbeing. However, some of (43.47%) the respondents verify that their schools have guidance and counselors.

Establishing clubs for the students that need extra support and follow up since participation in extracurricular activities is promoted by schools, can increase the school's involvement, which leads to the development of more positive attitudes towards schools and learning. To examine to what extent schools take such strategy, participants of the study were asked through the questionnaires and the result is presented in Table 5.

Table 5 depicts that most (65.51%) of the sample school principals confirmed that they have established a club for children whom teachers have identified as needing extra support and follow up. Whereas the rest (34.49) replied that they did not.

Adjusting school regulations

School related factors particularly school regulations and policies are one of the barriers that affect students' participation in schools. To alleviate such problems and encourage students' enrolment and participation schools should take school focused measures related to making exceptions in the application of school procedures and policies.

To this effect school principals of the sample schools were asked to mention to what extent the school adjust the school regulations and the result is presented in Figure 3.

As it is shown from th figure exactly half (50%) of the school principals have reported that when students miss more than a month of school, students are not allowed to return to school until the following year, when they start again in the same grade. While 36.84% of the respondents reported that students are allowed to return to school and teachers assist them to catch up the work they have missed.

Similarly, respondents were asked what is the school's regulation when students repeatedly miss classes. The responses are presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4 shows that relatively large number (40%) of the sample principals revealed that when students repeatedly miss days of school, students are allowed to return to school and teachers assist them to catch up with the work they have missed. On the other hand, 31.30% of them replied that students are allowed to return to school but are responsible for catching up with the work they have missed on their own.

On the other hand, a small number (6.10%) of principals reported that the measures that schools take if students repeatedly miss classes depend on the problem and the situation. For instance, students may be forced to bring their parents or leave school after consulting their parents. It depends upon the seriousness of the problem, and special reasons are considered.

Table 6 shows that when students arrive school late, relatively large number of the participant principals (39.13%) replied that students are allowed into the school but not allowed into class. However, relatively small proportion of the participant principals (4.34%) confirmed that students are not allowed to enter into the school. on the other hand, 30.43% of the participant school principals reported that there is no punishment in their schools Related to the above issue research respondents were asked another question related to the existence of school's regulations on the use of physical punishment and their response is summarized and presented in Table 7.

As it is seen from Table 7, the majority (60.86%) of the respondents and 30.43% reported that the school's regulations are that no forms of physical punishment are allowed and school does not have any regulations on physical punishment respectively. On the other hand, small proportion of (4.34%) the research participants reported that teachers have complete control over what forms of punishment they use and less harsh forms of physical punishment are allowed; but harsher forms are not.

Extra tutorials

As it is shown in Table 8 respondents were interrogated to mention whether schools provide extra tutorial class for students particularly for those students who are new to the school and transit from one level to the next or not. The great majority of the teacher respondents (83.9%)
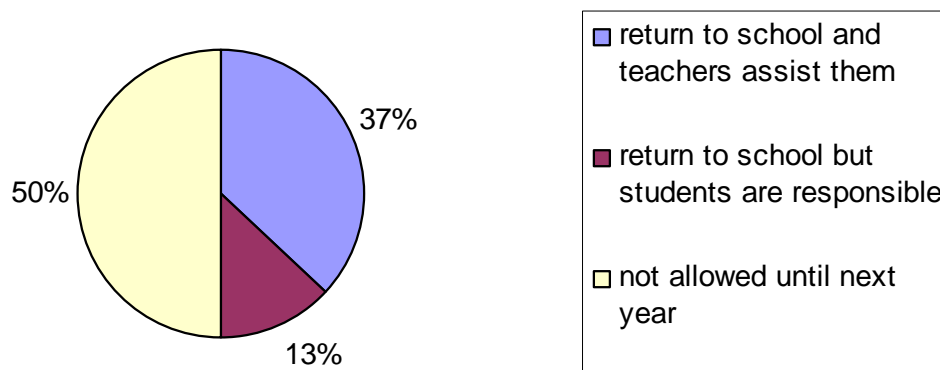
Figure 3. What are the schools regulation if students miss more than a month in school.
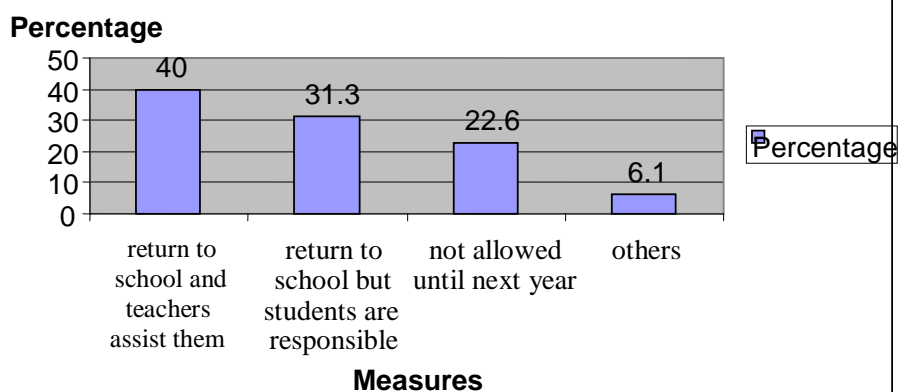

Figure 4. School's policy if students repeatedly miss days of school.

Table 6. Types of punishment if students arrive late for school.

Measure	Response	
	#	%
There is no punishment	7	30.43
Students are not allowed into the school	1	4.34
Students are allowed into the school but not allowed in to class	9	39.13
Students are allowed into school and into class but must complete another punishment after school	6	26.08
Total	23	100

Table 7. The school's policy on physical punishment.

Measure	Response	
	#	%
School does not have any regulations on physical punishment	7	30.43
Teachers have complete control over what forms of punishment they use	1	4.34
No forms of physical punishment are allowed	14	60.86
Less harsh forms of physical punishment are allowed, but harsher forms are not	1	4.34
All forms of physical punishment are allowed	-	-
Total	23	100

Table 8. Provision of extra tutorials after school or at weekends.

Option	Response	
	#	%
Yes	457	83.9
No	88	16.1
Total	545	100.0
Is there any payment to attend tutorials?		
Yes	13	2.4
No	450	82.6
N/a	82	15.0
Total	545	100.0

Table 9. Which students have to attend tutorials (attendance is compulsory)?

Types of student	No		Yes		N/a		N/k		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
All students	265	48.6	198	36.3	82	15.0			545	100.0
Students performing poorly in class	61	11.2	398	41.2	84	8.7	2	.4	545	100.0
Female students who are performing poorly	122	22.8	328	61.2	86	16.0	-	-	536	100.0
Students who have been absent from class for a long period	350	64.2	106	19.4	87	16.0	1	.1	545	100

Table 10. Chi-square analysis of reasons for drop out between urban and rural resident students.

Variables	#	Place of Residence		$X2$	P
		Urban	Rural		
Fees too expensive	4	1	3	35.82	<.001
Books and/or other supplies too expensive	7	0	7		
School too far from home	2	0	2		
Truancy, child does not want to go, not interested	12	5	7		
Banned from school because failed to achieve necessary grade	1	1	0		
Need to stay home to look after siblings	4	0	4		
Needed for domestic and/or agricultural work at home	21	4	17		
Have to do paid work to earn money	9	1	8		
Disability, illness	14	5	9		
Family member ill/disabled/elderly (including care for this	3	1	2		
Family issues e.g. problems at home – parent disputes	4	1	3		
Total	81	19	62		

asserted that they give additional tutorial to the students.

Respondent teachers were also asked to confirm whether students are requested to pay for attending extra tutorial class or not and the results on the same table revealed that the majority of (82.6%) the respondents made clear that there is no any payment required from the students to attend the extra tutorial class.

Table 9 shows the type of students who attend extra tutorial classes. As it is depicted from the table, most of the teachers (61.2 and 41.2%) reported that students attending most are students performing poorly in class and female students. It could be either because they are performing poorly or to encourage them to compete with the boys. This implies that not all types of students are allowed to attend the extra tutorial class.

Difference in reasons for drop out between place of residence

To investigate whether students who live in urban and rural differ on the reasons of drop out from school, a Chi-square statistical test was used. Table 10 shows the Pearson Chi-square result and indicates that students

who live in urban and rural areas are significantly different on the reasons they suggested for their drop out from schools ($X2$= 35.82, df= 14, n=81,p<001). Students who live in rural areas more likely than expected under the null hypothesis to mention reasons for drop out than students who live in urban areas. Phi, which indicates the strength of association between the two variables, is 0.130 and thus, the effect size is considered to be small according to Cohen (1988). This means that even though Chi-square is significant, the effect size is not large. In other words, the difference observed in reasons for students drop out from school is not strongly accounted for by being residents of rural or urban areas.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher would like to discuss two issues: the major common challenges students face during transition and the action schools take to mitigate the challenges and ease students' smooth transitions. First the barriers that make student to be absent/drop out from school would be examined. Then, the key measures schools take to help these students to continue their education would be discussed.
The findings of this study have suggested that of all the factors, the family related factors are prominent challenges that force students to be absent or drop out from school. From the family related factors the dominant one is the need for domestic and agricultural work at home (including chores, farm work, harvest); family issues, example problems at home; parental dispute/ marital conflicts; family member illness/disability/elderly (including care for this family members); and the need to stay home to look after other siblings. This result shows that the family related factors particularly the structure of the family and family resources are key barriers for students drop out from school.

A close examination of the family related factors reveals that in terms of frequency the most frequently reported factor among the family related challenges is the need for domestic and agricultural work at home. This is an opportunity cost of child labor and work. Families cannot afford the loss of income or labor contribution of their children, so their children do not enroll or attend school. Supporting this result many studies around the world show that child labor as factors that reduce child schooling emerges from poorest households (Basu and Van, 1998).

In addition, the second most frequently reported challenge, which is associated with family is family issue, example problems at home and parents disputes. When there is a conflict between the father and mother at home, students may be psychological disturbed and may not be ready to learn'. This leads to students' dropout. More important, changes in family structure, along with other potentially stressful events (such as family move,

illness, death, adults entering and leaving the households, and marital disruptions) increase the odds of dropping out (Rumberger and Sun, 2008).

Supporting the above idea research findings of Chirtes (2010) pointed out that family structure is one of the major causes of school dropout. The author further explained that family related problems such as separation or divorce, parental detention, conflicts, parents' death, single parenting and chronicle illness within the family cause significance trauma which finally leads to school dropout.

Individual related factors are the second dominant barriers particularly disability and illness, truancy (child not wanting to go, not interested in school). Truancy is most common when students move from primary to high school because the transition is filled with great anxiety and stress for many adolescents. Substantial research literature has emerged documenting the fact that the transition into high school is marked by increased dis-engagement and declining motivation particularly for low performing youths (National Research Council, 2004). Increased disengagement and declining motivation, in turn predict subsequent school dropout.

Substantiating the above idea Chirtes (2010) made it clear that absenteeism is determinant of students' achievement, promotion, graduation, self-esteem, and employment potential. Clearly, students who miss school fail behind their peers in the classroom. This in turn leads to low self-esteem and increases the likelihood that at risk students will drop out of school.

The existing literature shows that all stakeholders in children's education, particularly the schools are responsible for reducing students drop out from schools by taking various measures. The findings of this study revealed that though schools tried to support students by facilitating conditions for poor students to be helped by non-governmental organization; schools themselves do not exempt from paying fees or grants in cash or kind to poor children. The reasons may be lack of other sources of income to support the running cost of the school and support poor children. However, research findings suggest that being sponsored by the non-governmental organizations or exemptions of school fees by schools that reduce the costs of schooling (in the form of free uniforms and textbooks, scholarship or fee exemptions, raw food grains programs), are found to be effective means of improving participation rate in developing countries (Schultz, 2004).

Provision of food and health service is other measure that schools can take to help students continue their education. The result of the study portrays that schools do not offer food for education for poor children without payment. In addition, schools do not provide common health services at the school level such as booster immunization, tablets to kill worms or parasites, Vitamin A supplements, growth monitoring, examination by health workers so childhood diseases can be detected, and oral

health check. However, scholars argue that schools should design mechanisms that support poor children in provision of health and food services because school health and nutrition interventions are important investments in boosting students' enrollment and participation (World Bank, 2009).

Implementing flexible school regulations and policies is one measure that helps students to continue their education. The findings of this research depict that schools have regulations on students' absenteeism that states when student is absent from school more than a month he/she is not allowed to return to school until the following year, when they start again in the same grade. On the other hand, the policy of the school on students who miss repeatedly days of school states that they are allowed to return to school and teachers assist them to catch up the work they have missed. All those school policies and regulations are hindrances for students' enrollment and participation. Unless it is improved it is a cause for students drop out from schools. Substantiating the above idea DeLuca and Rosonbaum (2000) pointed out that bureaucratic regulations and overt actions taken by school officials can actually eliminate students from school enrollment.

Moreover, the findings show that schools do not have policy on physical or corporal punishment yet they implement other punishments. For instance, when students arrive late to schools, schools have a punishment policy that allows students to enter the school compound but not allowed into class. This indicates that students are punished by letting them to miss class and catch up by themselves. This result relates with other research findings by Alexander et al. (2001) who state that schools who have rigid school polices related to students behavior and truancy often carry punishments such as suspensions or expulsions that alternatively lead to students quitting school. This implies that schools who apply rigid school policies and procedures decrease students' enrollment and participation.

Schools at any level regardless of the level of education they offer ought to have guidance and counselor or social worker for guiding student in time of trouble; since students face a lot of problems at a school especially when they transit from one educational level to another. However, findings of the study revealed that most of the schools do not have guidance and counselor or social workers. This indicates that students find nobody when they face a problem and need consultation. This implies that lack of school guidance and counselor are one pushing factors for students to drop out from school. However, researchers such as Hayes et al. (2002) in their study pointed out that high school attrition indicates that preventive counseling, occurring before students are in crisis, reduces the risk of these students dropping out later. As a result, they suggest that schools should have counselors and school counselors ought to offer group or individual counseling with the students on a regular basis,

encourage socialization where possible and establish incentive, which are designed to reduce the tendency to drop out.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Factors associated with institutions, particularly the family related factor which is the opportunity costs of children are the main challenges that cause children to be absent or drop out from school. Hence, the concerned bodies (school principals, parent teacher associations, and woreda/district/ educational officers) should create awareness on the part of parents about children's education or provide orientation to parents so that they give priority to children's education and send them to school. Besides, they should involve parents in the children's education since they play an important role in how children perceive and cope with school, and they influence the decision children make.

The schools are either not willing to support poor students or have no adequate resources to help them not to drop out from school due to lack of financial and school supply support such as textbooks, uniforms etc. However, so as to boost enrolment and participation of students, schools should design a mechanism that helps students to fulfill the financial and school supply support, health and food services in the forms of generating income for these children. The schools may find non-governmental organizations, which work on education and create a link with these organizations and bring such support for poor children so as to not drop out from schools due to lack of school supply, malnutrition or illness.

Though schools have no corporal or physical punishment, they have rigid policies and procedures that affect students' enrollment and participation. This implies that schools do not make exceptional on the application of school polices and procedures for these students. Nevertheless, of all stakeholders, schools have a lot of thing to do for the students not to drop out from school. One of these is adjusting school policies and procedures in such a way that it can accept, respond, and accommodate poor children. The other way could be having trained professional school guidance and counselors or social workers that can guide students with problems. In a situation where the schools have no such guidance and counselor, they can assign an experienced teacher or team of teachers that can support students in counseling.

Finally it should be remembered that though it is not as expected most schools are trying to help students through establishing extracurricular clubs for identifying students that need help and offerings extra tutorials for those students who perform poorly in class and females. This needs to be strengthened and continued by all schools.

REFERENCES

Alexander KL, Entwisle DR, Olson LS (2001). Schools, Achievement, and Inequality: A Seasonal Perspective, Educ. Eval. Policy Anal. 23(2):171-191.

Bailey DK (1994). Methods of Social Research (4th ed). New York: The Free Press.

Basu K, Van PH (1998). 'The economics of child labor', Am. Econ. Rev. 88(3):412-427.

Best WJ, James VK (2005). Research in Education.(9th ed). New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India.

Chirtes G (2010). A case study into the cause of school dropout. *Acta Didactica Napocensia*, 3(4):25-34

Cohen J (1988). Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences, 2nd Edition. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Cohen L, Lawrence M, Keith M (2007). Research Methods in Education. London: Routledge

Deluca S, Rosenbaum JE (2000). Is housing mobility the key to welfare reform. Washington Dc: Bookings Institute center.

Hargreaves A, Earl LM, Ryan J (1996). Schooling for change: Reinventing education for early adolescents. London: Falmer Press.

Hayes RL, Nelson J, Tabin M, Pearson G, Worthy C (2002). Using school-wide data to advocate for student success. Prof. School Couns. 6(2):86-95.

Howard S, Bruce J (2004). 'Transition From Primary To Secondary School: Possibilities and Paradoxes' in P. Jeffery (ed.) AARE 2004 Conference Papers, Melbourne: AARE.

Kerlinger NF (1986). Foundations of Behavioral Research (3rd ed). Chicago: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

Laugharn P (2007). Negotiating Education for Many Enrollment, Dropout and persistence in the community schools of Kolondieba, Mali. London: Institute of Education.

Mbewe MS, Nampota DC (2007). Urban Primary Schooling in Malawi: Opportunities and Challenges. Int. Handbook Urban Educ. 115-128.

Mertens MD (1998). Research Methods in Education and Psychology: Integrating Diversity with Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches. London: Sage Publications.

Ministry of Education (2010). Education Sector Development Program ESDP IV. Addis Ababa: Ministry of Education.

Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA) (2006). Child Labor in Ethiopia: Analysis of a Survey Conducted in 2001. Addis Ababa: MOLSA.

National Research Council (2004). Engaging schools: Fostering high school students' motivation to learn. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

Rumberger R, Sun AL (2008). Why students Drop out of school: A review of 25 Years of Research. California: University of California Santa Barbara.

Schaffner J (2004). "The Determinants of schooling investment among primary school aged children in Ethiopia" World Bank Working Paper Series, Washington: World Bank.

Schultz TP (2004). School subsidies for the poor: Evaluating the Mexican PROGRESA Poverty Program. J. Dev. Econ. 74:199-250.

Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) (1994). *Ethiopian Education and Training Policy.* Addis Ababa: Birhanena selam printing press.

USAID (1993) Demand for schooling in Rural Ethiopia. Addis Ababa: Mega Publishing press.

UNESCO (2005). EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006, Education for All – Literacy for Life. Paris: UNESCO.

Wood HM, Psacharopoulos G (1995). Education for Development An Analysis of Investment Choice. New York: Oxford University Press

World Bank (2009). School Health and Nutrition Policy Brief. World Bank, Jakarta