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Towards Student-Centred Pedagogy

Action Research with Ethiopian Village School Teachers

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Cover picture: *New learning games at the Village School* by Kati Keski-Mäenpää

ABSTRACT

This study is an action research that was planned and implemented with 23 Ethiopian Village School teachers. The action of the four year project concentrated on developing new, student-centred teaching methods instead of traditional lecturing and rote learning in one remote school. The overall aim of the study was to follow this process and the teachers' professional development, and to explore how the practical arrangements, such as material or cultural surroundings, constrain or enable usage of student-centred methods at the school. The theoretical framework of the study consists of theories about professional development, action research, and the theory of practice architectures.

The data have been collected by group discussions, interviews, videotapes and field notes. My diary notes, samples of the Finnish teacher students' trainee reports and photos are added to give deeper understanding about the context. Data have been analysed thematically and through the theory of practice architectures.

The findings of the study show that participatory action research helped teachers to develop new culturally suitable teaching methods based on student-centred pedagogy. It increased teachers' collaboration, raised their motivation and supported their professional development. The analysis revealed that existing practical arrangements at the school do not support the use of a student-centred teaching method. For example, a detailed curriculum, annual tests, a high student-teacher ratio and a lack of teaching and learning materials support teacher-led teaching and make it difficult to implement student-centred teaching methods.

If the wish is for student-centred learning methods to be used in every school of Ethiopia, changes in curricula, student-teacher ratios and the examination system are needed. Encouraging and equipping teachers to do their own action research projects at the schools will support their continuous professional development.

Keywords: action research, student-centred learning, practice architectures, professional development

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ABBREVIATIONS

AR	Action Research
CTE	College of Teacher Education
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
EFA	Education for All
EPRDF	Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front
ESDP	Education Sector Development Program
MoE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PTA	Parent Teachers Association
PTR	Pupil-teacher ratio
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region
SCL	Student-centred learning
TCL	Teacher-centred learning
TTC	Teacher Training College
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

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> Something very strange happened today. I participated in a governmental celebration in the countryside here in Ethiopia and somebody introduced me to an older male teacher. I had a long discussion with him, he told me about their village school not far from there and also the challenges they had. He asked me if I would be interested in visiting them and maybe also doing research at the school. The idea about doing research had been alive since I finished my Master's and today I thought: Maybe this is the point when I really should do it. (My diary, September 2011)

The diary note is the beginning of this case study, and first step of a four-year long research process in one Ethiopian village school with 23 primary and secondary school teachers. By that time I already had lived in Ethiopia for several years, worked there as a teacher and knew the local language and culture. Many of my Ethiopian friends were teachers as well, and they had told me about their everyday challenges especially in rural areas. I had planned to do research in Ethiopia, but had not found a suitable topic. After meeting one of the Village School teachers at the governmental celebration and being invited to their school, I travelled there and made a plan with the teachers to start an action research together.

Doing action research (AR) was an ethical choice for me. Because the situation at the school was very challenging like in other village schools too, I felt it necessary "to do something," and I thought that action research could be an effective tool to improve the situation in collaboration with the teachers. The goal of participatory action research (PAR) is to improve a real situation in a real context in collaboration with the stakeholders. According to this principle, the Village school teachers chose the topic of the research. The principles of AR were familiar for the Village School teachers through their in-service training. The very current issue at the school was the government's order to change the teaching methods to more student-centred learning from the traditional ways of teaching based on lecturing and rote learning. Teachers felt that they were not able to change the methods without support and they wished that our research might aim to improve this particular situation.

The challenge of using the methods based on student-centred learning (SCL) is not new, because the educational sector in Ethiopia has been bringing in more active and student-centred learning since the introduction of the new education policy of 1994. Education Sector Development Program IV (MoE, 2010a) focuses on improving student achievements by enhancing the teaching–learning process and by transforming schools into motivating and child-friendly environments. However, the process has been difficult for the teachers. The roots of rote learning, copying and lecturing are based in Islam and Orthodox Christian schools (Ferede & Haile, 2015; Semela, 2014), and these traditional lecture methods, in which teachers talk and students listen, still dominate most classrooms (Serbessa, 2006).

Reports (Abebe & Woldehanna, 2013; Gemeda, Fiorucci, & Catarci, 2014) show that other reasons for challenges in implementation of student-centred teaching in Ethiopian schools are the lack of institutional support and the fact that the curriculum was based on Western cultures and did not take traditional cultures and values much into consideration. Because the new curriculum was

imposed from the top down, it did not consider comments from teachers, who are responsible for implementing the curriculum (Abebe & Woldehanna, 2013). Lectures about student-centred pedagogy are given in teacher training colleges (TTCs), but these theories have not been effectively transferred to real context. Student-centred pedagogy is familiar for teachers at the theory level, but transforming the knowledge into practice has been problematic. According to Serbessa (2009), "Little attempt is made by the policy document and other subsequent education strategy documents to give elaborations and to indicate how it can be translated into the teaching-learning process at the classroom level." The goal of this action research was to bring the principles of student-centred pedagogy into practice. Even though other research has been made regarding student-centred pedagogy in Ethiopian schools (Abebe & Woldehanna, 2013; Gemeda et al., 2014), AR for improving the situation has not been published. This report presents an action research process and analyses how teachers in one rural school developed culturally suitable, student-centred teaching methods in the actual context instead of transferring them from other cultures.

1.1   Research process and tasks

This research included four cycles, which followed the action research spiral of planning, acting, reflecting and observing. These cycles are described in detail in Chapters 4 - 7. The action consisted, for instance, of workshops and co-teaching planned by the Village School teachers. Each cycle was planned after reflecting the outcomes of the previous cycle. All 23 teachers participated in the research, and some of the activities were a part of the school's Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme which is compulsory for all teachers. The school here is called "the Village School".

The school is located in the rural area of Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' - Region (SNNPR). The participants and the research context are presented more closely in Chapter 3.2. A qualitative approach was chosen for this study, because it focuses on understanding phenomena in their context-specific settings. In this study, this means deepening the understanding of the experiences that the Village School teachers have in their work in the Ethiopian rural context.

This research concentrates on teachers and on their educational practices such as teaching, professional learning and development. According to the principles of AR, the research tasks were not chosen beforehand, but were formulated during the research process. They are:

1) To describe the stages of the process, to give an idea of the kind of activities the action research included, how it was planned and why the research took the form that it did;

2) To follow the changes in participants' teaching methods and their professional development;

3) To determine the cultural-discursive, the material-economic and the social-political arrangements at the school; and to assess how they enable or constrain using the student-centred teaching methods;
4) To clarify how the cultural-discursive, the material-economic and the social-political arrangements at the school changed during the AR project and how they enable or constrain the new kind of activities at the school.

The theories of professional development (Day & Sachs, 2004; Kelchtermans, 2004; Villegas-Reimers, 2003) and the theory of practice architectures (e.g., Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008) are used to support the analysis and interpretation and to deepen my understanding of the data. They were not selected beforehand, but were chosen during the research. In this sense, this research is abductive and has features of grounded theory. Anyhow, these theories are familiar to me from my teacher training and experiences as a class teacher in Finland.

1.2   Action research steps

This action research consisted of several steps, as depicted in Table 1. The process also continued at the school between my visits, especially during the fourth cycle, when teachers took the leading role in the process. My visits usually lasted from 3 to 5 days, and during the visits of Finnish teacher students for several weeks.

TABLE 1   Action research steps

Time	Cycle	Action
October 2011	1	First discussion, planning the first cycle
January 2012	1	Workshop about the student-centred teaching methods, planning the second cycle
April 2012	2	Planning the lessons together, videotaping and observing them
October 2012	2	Discussion, planning the third cycle
January 2013	3	Co-teaching with Finnish teacher students (1)
October 2013	3	Planning the second visit of Finnish teacher –students
January 2014	3	Co-teaching with Finnish teacher students (2)
October 2014	3	Discussion, planning the fourth cycle
2014 - 2015	4	Individual activities by teachers
June 2015	4	Reflection of the fourth cycle, final discussion

Data were collected by using individual and group discussions, field notes, observation and interviews. My diary notes and samples of the Finnish teacher students' trainee reports are included to demonstrate the context, but they are not part of the analysed data. Photos inserted in this research report aim to pro-

vide readers with practical information about the research context and rural schools in Ethiopia. The photos were taken in several rural schools in various parts of Ethiopia by two Finnish students and me.

Two kinds of analyses were undertaken: first, a thematical analysis that identified key themes; and second, practice theory (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014) focusing on the discursive, material and social conditions that enable and constrain the practice, which means in this research teaching and using student-centred teaching methods at the Village School. Interpretation was a creative process that went on during the entire research.

My goal was to make this research as participatory as possible, so that all teachers would be involved in planning, implementing and observing the action at the school. It turned out that not all teachers were used to reflecting on their own work or profession critically, and I was considered at first as an outsider expert. For these reasons this research did not become as participatory as I wished for. I recognize these limitations. Anyhow, all teachers participated during the three first cycles, and three key informants led the last fourth cycle. The goal of the AR and the action at the school was planned totally by the teachers.

This research is not a pure ethnographic research but has features of it. I stayed rather long time in the field and experienced the teachers' reality by teaching at the same school with them. I visited their homes and learned to know them not only as research partners but as friends, too. Knowing their language, Amharic, and living in the country for several years helped me to gain a deeper understanding than I would have received otherwise. Behaving according to their culture helped me to be accepted among the teachers and the students.

1.3   Background assumptions

Action research is a participatory research method and the activities of the research are planned during the research. In this research, each cycle is planned according to the previous cycle in cooperation with the participants. For these reasons, I was not able to make a hypothesis beforehand. My pre-assumption was based on previous research (Abebe & Woldehanna, 2013; Gemeda & Tynjälä, 2015a, 2015b) and my experience was that there are demands at village schools. Due to other action research projects conducted in Ethiopia (Degago, 2012; Shenkuti & Licht, 2005; Worku, 2017), I assumed that these challenges could probably be improved by AR.

According to the principles of AR, the participants of this research chose the challenge they wanted to improve by their actions. Beforehand, I thought that teachers might choose a problem related to a lack of material, and I was surprised when they brought up teaching methods. According to the principles of action research, the solutions are not provided by the researcher, but are found and created in cooperation by all participants. For that reason, and because I wanted to make this research as participatory as possible, I tried not to

lead the action, group discussions or interviews too much. I was still part of the research process, and could influence how this research evolved.

The philosophical viewpoint of this study is pragmatism. This research is practical from its nature and therefore AR was chosen to the research tool and approach. The goal of AR is in change and it is often related to change-oriented critical theories (e.g. Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Depoy & Gilson, 2017). The aims of critical social theories are emancipatory practice-oriented, and committed to change towards a better, more just society and to empower people. In addition, it is practice-oriented in the sense that it focuses problems pertaining to people's everyday practices and proposes solutions to them (e.g. Mertens, 2008; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Critical participatory action research aims at changing practitioners' practices, their understandings of their practices, and the conditions in which they practice (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014).

In this research, teachers' and their actions are seen in their genuine context and as a part of their historical, political and social context. I believe that social reality at the Village School was constructed through interaction with all the stakeholders including me as a researcher.

This research was not based on previous theories being more abductive than deductive. Theories of professional development and practice architectures were included during the research, and their role was to support the analysis and my understanding of the researched context. These theories which were familiar to me from my teacher training and experiences as a teacher in Finland, like my own acts and pre-assumptions, were part of the interpretation. I was aware that my cultural lenses, previous experiences and pre-assumptions affected what I observed and considered important or not important. I was at the school not only as a researcher, but also as a woman, as a Finnish teacher and as a NGO employee, although I wanted to avoid the role of charity worker at the school. I did not have funds to support the school financially, and I wanted to be seen as an equal co-researcher and teaching colleague. In any case, all these roles are part of me and affect my behaviour, observations and interpretations. For that reason my observations or interpretations cannot be objective. For example, what I consider as a high student-teacher ratio is based on my experiences as a teacher in Finland. A class of 40 students is a big teaching group for me, but in the context of Ethiopia it is rather small compared to the reality of 60 to 80 students in one classroom. Also the way I understand the student-centred learning differs from the view of Ethiopian teachers. To avoid directing the research according to my views, we used guidelines given by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (2009).

To ensure the quality of interpretation, I discussed the whole research process throughout the research period with Ethiopian teachers and researchers. Bogdan & Biklen (2003) emphasise that all description represents choices and judgments to some degree – decisions about what to put down and the exact use of words. Field notes in this research are seen "as the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collect-

ing and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, pp. 110 - 111).

1.4   Dissertation form and structure

The study consists of nine chapters. Chapter 1 provides the introduction to the research and context of the study. Chapter 2 presents the overview of the context and history of the Ethiopian schooling system. This chapter's purpose is to give the reader an understanding about the teachers' backgrounds and their work in the context of participating in this research. Chapter 3 clarifies the methodological choices. It summarizes action research goals, history and form, as well as ethical questions, and clarifies the research process, collected data and analysis used in the study.

The research tasks will be reflected in Chapters 4 - 8 (Table 2). Chapters 4 - 7 are descriptions of action research cycles, and they clarify how the participatory action research with the Village School teachers was done. These chapters focus on the first research task, which was to describe the stages of the process, to give an idea of what was done, and why and how it was done. I will also clarify in these chapters the changes in participants' teaching methods and their professional development.

Chapter 8 provides the conclusion of the cycles and the goals, to clarify the second research task further and to highlight especially the third research task, which was to determine the cultural-discursive, the material-economic and the social-political arrangements at the school, and to assess how they enable or constrain the usage of student-centred teaching methods. Chapter 9 will present the findings of the research and continue the discussion of all three research tasks.

TABLE 2   Research tasks and chapters related to the tasks

Research task	Chapter(s)
1) To describe the stages of the process; to give an idea what kind of activities the action research included, how it was planned and why the research took the form it did	4 - 8
2) To follow the changes in participants' teaching methods and their professional development	4 - 8
3) To determine the cultural-discursive, the material-economic and the social-political arrangements at the school, and to assess how they enable or constrain using the student-centred teaching methods	8
4) To clarify how the cultural-discursive, the material-economic and the social-political arrangements at the school changed during the AR project and how they enabled or con-strained the new kind of activities at the school	8

2 RESEARCH CONTEXT: ETHIOPIA AND RURAL SCHOOLS

In this chapter I will take a closer look into the Ethiopian context: the history of education, education policy, teacher training, the structure of the education system and the challenges of rural education. These are part of the cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements that define how schooling is conducted in Ethiopia.

The physical context of this research is Ethiopia, which is in sub-Saharan Africa. Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Africa, with a population of more than 90 million (Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia, 2015). Of this, 46. 4 million (51%) are under the age of 18. The rapid expansion of the population places additional demands on the education system. The urbanized

population is only 17. 2 % (UNICEF, 2012), which puts pressure on the education system in rural areas. Over 80 different languages and 200 dialects are spoken in the country. The largest language groups are Oromo (33. 8%) and Amharic (29. 3%) (Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia, 2015).

There are several religions; most members of the population either belong to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (43. 5%) or practice Islam (33. 9%). Additionally, 19. 3% belong to the Catholic or Protestant churches, and 2. 6% of the population are animists (World atlas, 2017). The ethnic, linguistic and physical characteristics of each region also impact greatly on education. For example, parts of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples´ Region (SNNPR), where the school of this research is also located, have a large population of nomadic, pastoralist peoples, among whom traditional practices can be very strong (Sarton, Lalla-Maharajh, & Parsons, 2009). A closer look into education of nomadic children is presented later in Chapter 2.6.3.

2.1 From Church schools to the current situation

The history of Ethiopian education is rooted in Christian and Islamic education. Church schools in the highland Christian community and Mosques in the peripheral areas were the responsible institutions providing education from the fourth century AD until the early 1990s (Ferede & Haile, 2015; Semela, 2014). The goal of monasteries and the Orthodox Church was mainly to produce religious functionaries, but they also produced civil servants, such as judges, governors, scribes, treasurers and administrators. The curriculum included, for instance, religious subjects, history, social customs, foreign and local languages. Studies were more Ethio-centric than ethno-centric, and there was a strong emphasis on the learning of Ethiopic (Ge'ez) Syllable, the Ethiopian writing system. Churches were available in every village, and every church had its own school, but access to church education was limited and the education was restricted to boys only (Ferede & Haile, 2015).

Learning was based on rote memorisation, and the contents of the education system did not develop the understanding for students' creativity, criticism, and imagination (Ferede & Haile, 2015). The tradition of rote learning and lecturing has defined education since the time of the first Church schools, and in this light it is easy to understand why changing the teaching techniques is demanding for teachers in Ethiopia even nowadays.

Since the 1940s Ethiopia has experienced three systems of political governance, and each of them have been distinguished by their education policies. The first of these was the imperial system, which started soon after the Second World War and lasted until 1974. The second was the military/socialist system, popularly known as the "derg" (1974 - 1991). The third and current federal system formally began in 1994. (Negash, 2006). These three systems of political government and education are considered in the next chapters.

2.1.1 Colonial impact

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church was the leading institution for education until the introduction of modern education at the beginning of the 20th century. Modern education in sub-Saharan Africa has a strong colonial component, and Ethiopia also shows a colonial influence even though it was never colonialized. Modern education began with the introduction of expatriates from countries like Britain, France, Italy, the USA and Egypt (Tekeste, 1990), and the first government school in Ethiopia, called Menelik II School, was established in Addis Ababa in 1908 by Emperor Menelik II, who was the ruler of Ethiopia at that time (Ferede & Haile, 2015; Tekeste, 1990; Woldesenbet, 2015).

At the time of Menelik's reign between 1889 and 1913, a system of free education for all school-aged children was established and Western education was expanded, which was strongly opposed by the Church. However, individual intellectuals and liberal politicians put pressure on the ruling monarchy to launch a Western-style, secular education system (Semela, 2014; Tekeste, 1990; Zewde, 2002). The idea of bringing expatriates to work as teachers was met with resistance, and as a compromise Menelik imported teachers from Egypt. New teachers were members of the Egyptian Coptic Church and the government's decision was now accepted by the Church. The students were taught languages mostly, like French, Italian, English and Amharic, but the curriculum also included math and sports. The government had imported staffs from Egypt to help build up the formal education, but these expatriates did not embody the indigenous Ethiopian cultural contexts, values and aspirations. As a result, the educational curriculum and policies they implemented were detached from the reality for majority of the country's population. (Ferede & Haile, 2015; Semela, 2014.)

During the time of the Italian invasion and five-year period of Fascist occupation (1936 - 1941) the already fragile education system collapsed. Schools were closed throughout the country and transferred to military camps, education materials were destroyed and educated Ethiopians were killed. (Semela, 2014.) In the post-war period, education became dependent on expatriate advisors, administrators and teachers. An Italian curriculum was introduced in 1936. It included a dual system of education with two types of schooling, namely "Italian type of schools" and schools for colonial subjects. (Ferede & Haile, 2015.)

The Italians were defeated in 1941, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education was re-established, and expatriate teachers from Britain and British colonies took their place at the schools. By the 1950s there were 540 schools and 53, 000 students. In addition, the "University College of Addis Ababa," the current Addis Ababa University, was established. (Tekeste, 1990.)

2.1.2 "The golden age" of Ethiopian education

The time between 1940 and 1970 is called the "golden age" of Ethiopian education. Emperor Haile Selassie (1892 - 1975) is recognized as the promoter of free education based on Western education systems. The emperor was convinced

that modern education, carried out by Lutheran missionaries, was an excellent strategy to educating and training citizens who respected their king, country and religion. During the time of Haile Selassie modern schools in the urban and semi-urban areas of the country were established. The Emperor spoke on the role of education in the context of Ethiopian civilisation, where moral studies were an important component. (Negash, 2006; Semela, 2014.)

The curriculum of Ethiopian schools was highly irrelevant to the historical experience and contemporary socio-economic situation of the country. "The golden age" came to an end towards the end of the 1960s. In 1961, the net enrolment ratio in primary education was only 6. 6%. The majority of secondary school graduates were unemployed, while 90% of the population were illiterate. On the other hand, the quality of teaching was better than before. At the secondary level, most of the teachers were native speakers of English and the student-teacher ratio was below 40:1. However, the education system brought from the UK, USA and various European countries was alien to Ethiopians, and did not consider their cultures, indigenous philosophies, and native languages. (Ferede & Haile, 2015; Negash, 2006; Semela, 2014; Tekeste, 1990.)

2.1.3 The socialistic system of governance and education

After the social revolution in 1974, the military Junta proclaimed a campaign which was called *Zemecha* ('Development Through Cooperation and Work Campaign') (Semela, 2014). Ethiopia was declared a republic and ruled by a Socialist/Communist Workers Party. The economy was socialised; urban and rural lands were put under state control. Following the ideology of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies, the Ethiopian government began to put more emphasis on the role of education for development. The United States of America, one of the main partners in the development of the Ethiopian education sector, was replaced by educational experts from Eastern Germany. (Negash, 2006.)

The aim of the Zemecha Campaign was to educate the rural population, which was predominantly illiterate. Young students and teachers were transferred to mobilization centres. The socialist regime gathered together all new and old secondary school students and sent them to the countryside to teach the new socialist revolution. Teacher training centres were closed for over two years. The Ministry of Education hired untrained teachers, which had negative influence on the quality of education in the country. During the imperial period, the best and brightest students were selected to be teachers, but now a career as a primary school teacher was left to those who were unable to make it to higher education to study other fields. The majority of teacher students were neither motivated nor academically competent. (Negash, 2006; Semela, 2014.)

School curricula followed the principle of "All-rounded socialist personality". The political economy of Marxism/Leninism was made a subject at all levels of the education system. At the upper secondary level, schools had to be staffed by expatriate teachers and, because of the lack of funds, the government was unable to staff schools, and getting adequate local teachers was not possi-

ble. The mass extermination of the educated, of which the majority were teachers, made the shortage of teachers even worse. At the same time, school enrolment for the 7-16 year-old school-aged cohort grew from 12% to 35%. The rate of illiteracy was reduced from about 93% to 37%. In addition, female students' participation was improved from 4% to 30% by 1983. The shift system, where students followed all their studies either in the morning or in the afternoon, was also introduced. This enabled schooling for higher number of students. (MoE, 1989, as quoted by Woldesenbet, 2015; Negash, 2006; Semela, 2014.)

2.1.4 The federal system of governance

The ruling party EPRDF (Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front), replaced the Communist regime in 1991. The country currently consists of nine regional states (Afar, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, Harari, Oromia, SNNPR, Somali and Tigray) and two administrations (Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa) (Figure 1); these federated units are defined according to ethnicity. (Semela, 2014; Oumer, 2009.)
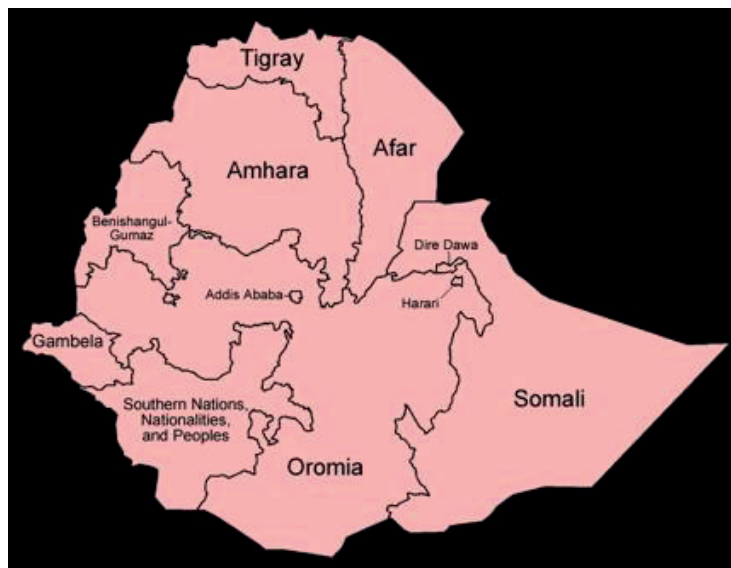
FIGURE 1   Ethiopian states (www.ezega.com)

In the educational sector this means the devolution of authority from the federal government MoE to the regional education bureaus and further down to the local/district levels. The managerial and administrative structure of the education consist of federal, region, zone and school layers. The Federal Ministry of Education is responsible for setting and maintaining national education standards and policies. Major decisions, such as choosing the language of education, developing school curricula, and management and administration of education

are under the respective regions. This includes the right to use mother tongue as medium in primary schools and teachers' institutions. (Oumer, 2009; Semela, 2014.) Regional education bureaus formulate regional educational policy and strategies. They also administer and manage primary and secondary education, junior colleges, technical and vocational schools and teacher training institutes. Additionally, they prepare curriculum for primary schools and provide technical and material support. (Oumer, 2009; MoE, 2002.) The regions are divided into zones, which are separated into districts, *woredas* in rural areas, or sub-city administrations; and finally, *kebeles*, at the village level (Lasonen, Kemppainen & Raheem, 2005). The woredas are key local government units in each region and are responsible for the provision of basic services. (Oumer, 2009). Schools are autonomous in their internal administration and in the designing and implementing of education and training programs. The overall coordination and leadership is handled by education and training boards and/or Parent Teachers Associations (PTA), consisting of members from the community, education and other offices, teachers and students. (MoE & UNESCO, 2013.) Staffing levels are centrally approved, but personnel are locally hired and managed.

The landscape of Ethiopian education has changed dramatically since 1994. The net enrolment rate at the primary school level for the year 2000/01 was estimated at 41.7% for girls and 55.7% for boys. The corresponding data for the year 2013/14 were found to be 90.1% for girls and 95.1% for boys. At the secondary school level, the net enrolment for boys was 19.6% for boys and 20.9% for girls in 2013/14. (EFA, 2016). One of the possible reasons for the lower rate of secondary participation may be the distances to the schools or the lack of accommodation for the students. The MoE has paid attention to this problem and its goal is to ensure that all children can access a school at all levels, within an appropriate distance for their age. (EFA, 2016.)

While the attendance rate has been growing, studies show that the quality of education is still the burning issue in Ethiopia (EFA, 2016; Dagnew & Asrat, 2016) and one of the main concerns of the MoE. Since 1991, after the military government collapsed, education has been a development priority of the national agenda. The goal of the government's General Education Quality Improvement Program (GEQIP) is to improve learning conditions in primary and secondary schools and to strengthen institutions at different levels of educational administration. The project has six components: (i) Curriculum, Textbooks Assessment, Examinations and Inspection; (ii) Teacher Development Program (TDP); (iii) School Improvement Plan (SIP), including school grants; (iv) Management and Capacity Building; (v) Improving the Quality of Learning and Teaching through the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT); and (vi) Program Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Communication. (EFA, 2016.)

In addition, the educational policy goals, strategies and programmes are addressing the problems of access, equity, quality, and relevance in education (Lasonen et al., 2005). In recent years, government efforts have focused on expanding access to primary education, particularly in rural areas, but as a conse-

quence, insufficient resources have been allocated to improving the quality of education (Pereznieto & Jones, 2006). The challenges Ethiopia is facing in its educational sector can be confronted in many other countries as well. The number of children enrolled in primary schools in sub-Saharan Africa has increased in recent years, but it is still more than half of the global total of out-of-school children. Children with disabilities are marginalized in many countries in the area, and only small number of them have any possibility to attending school. Other obstacles common in the area are high number of drop-outs, high student-teacher ratios and shortages of educated teachers. (Pereznieto & Jones, 2006.)

2.2 Teacher training

The main focus of the current education system is to provide equitable access to good-quality education in both rural and urban areas (Abebe & Woldehanna, 2013). Educated and motivated teachers are seen as the main source of quality education (EFA, 2015), and the government has enhanced teacher training and development programmes. Teacher education and training in Ethiopia, as well as other sub-Saharan African education systems, are suffering from rapid expansion. The challenge is how to prepare qualified teachers and ensure that they are sufficient in numbers. In Africa, and sub-Saharan countries in particular, there are significant number of un- and under qualified teachers. (Moon & Wolfenden, 2012; Soko, 2014.) The development and recruitment of teachers is a concern in sub-Saharan African rural areas, in particular. Rural areas are disadvantaged and associated with high levels of poverty. The shortfall of trained teachers has led to the employment of unqualified teachers across the region. (Soko, 2014.)

In Ethiopia, one of the major challenges for teachers at the both primary and secondary levels is a lack of pedagogical knowledge, particularly in applying student-centred methods of teaching (Abebe & Woldehanna, 2013). The policy emphasizes innovative teaching and learning, but traditional lecture methods still dominate in most classrooms (Serbessa, 2006). The way teachers are educated in teacher training colleges affects the way they teach their own students at schools. The same kind of obstacles are faced in Tanzania (Ottevanger, de Feiter, O-saki & van den Akker, 2005, as quoted by Soko, 2014), where the approach to teaching in secondary schools is characterised by memorisation of a large amount of verbal information, so as to pass examinations. Practical activities and demonstrations are hardly done at all, and the attitudes towards learning are focused on memorisation. The students carry this attitude forward into their own teaching practices. However, the move towards more practically-focused, outcomes-based, school-focused teacher training can be seen in many teacher training systems worldwide (Moon & Wolfenden, 2012).

Teacher training in Ethiopia falls into three categories: pre-service training, in-service training (called continuous professional development, CPD), and in-

formal on-the-job –training, or work experience (Abebe & Woldehanna, 2013). In the following chapters, I will take a closer look into the pre-service and in-service teacher training in Ethiopia. This action research is part of the in-service training (CPD) of the Village School, designed according to ESDP IV, which is part of series of Education Sector Development Programmes (ESDP I, ESDP II, ESDP III and ESDP IV). The issue of quality and student-centred learning methods are emphasised especially in ESDP IV.

2.2.1 Pre-service training

The three-year diploma programme for primary teacher education is comprised of two levels. The cluster level prepares teachers for lower primary teaching in grades 1 - 4, and the linear level prepares teachers for upper primary teaching in grades 5 - 8. (Moe & UNESCO, 2013). To teach in primary education, teachers are expected to have a diploma and in secondary school, they should have a Bachelor's degree of the subject they are teaching (Table 3). However, at the primary level, just fewer than 30% of teachers retain a qualification considered too low by the standard, and a majority of them have joined the training required to upgrade the level required. (EFA, 2015.)

TABLE 3 Education of teachers in Ethiopia, Sarton et al. (2009, p. 46)

Grade	Training Institute	Length of Training	Qualification
primary 1 - 8	College of Teacher Education	3 years	Diploma
secondary 9 - 10	University	3 years	Bachelor's degree

To be able to apply to TTC, students must complete 10 years of general education. Only a marginal grade-point average is required to attend teacher training, and the selection system does not attract the most suitable candidates to teacher training (MoE & UNESCO, 2013). The students studying at TTC are often those who have not been able to make it for higher education studies, and 90% of teacher candidates do not identify the teaching profession as their preferred career. Additionally, females, students from rural areas and from linguistic and ethnic minorities are under-represented among teacher candidates. The quality of the pre-service teacher training has been deemed to be weak, with shortages of teaching materials, didactic teaching methods, inadequacy of practice teaching and insufficient support for teacher candidates with poor English language competence. (MoE & UNESCO, 2013; Semela, 2014.)

The rate of qualification in secondary level is higher (92.6%) than in primary schools. At the general secondary (9 - 10) and preparatory (11 - 12) levels, teachers are required to hold a subject-area-specific Bachelor's and Master's degree. They also need to complete a one-year postgraduate degree in teaching. From academic year 2015/16, this postgraduate degree has been a requirement for all new teachers passing through a university. (EFA, 2015)

2.2.2 In-service training and professional development

In-service training is training given for teachers already working at schools and it concentrates on professional development. Other commonly used terms are in-staff development and teacher development. Professional development is defined as a "long-term process that includes regular opportunities and experiences planned systematically to promote growth and development in the profession" (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). The purpose of professional development is to "deepen teachers' knowledge, strengthen individual practice and build collective capacity for improvement of teaching and learning at the school level in order to build cultures of inquiry" (Day & Sachs, 2004, p. xiii). Professional development may be also seen as "a political process used by governments to align the curriculum in order to achieve broader political agendas" (Day & Sachs, 2004, p. xiii). Keltchtermans (2004, p. 217) emphasizes considering the context when he states that "professional development is conceived of as a learning process, resulting from the meaningful interaction between the teacher and their professional context, both in time and space. This interaction eventually leads to changes in a teacher's professional practice as well as in their thinking about that practice."

In Ethiopia, the government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have offered several short and long-term professional development programs for teachers in order to enhance teachers' skills and attitudes (Abebe & Woldehanna, 2013). These programmes have been, for instance, summer programmes, short courses, seminars, workshops, professional meetings, consultation, peer and colleague support, as well as mentoring. This kind of teachers' in-service training is known as Continuous Professional Development (CPD). It is a term used to describe all the activities in which teachers engage during the course of a career that are designed to enhance their work (Day & Sachs, 2004). The policy emphasizes a "career-long process of improving knowledge, skills and attitudes, centred on the local context and particularly classroom practice" (MoE, 2009, pp. 15 - 16).

Currently the CPD activities in Ethiopian primary and secondary schools are designed to promote active learning, problem-solving, and student-centred teaching. The CPD framework (MoE, 2009) states: "CPD is a compulsory requirement for those who teach in all Ethiopian educational establishments. It is the civic and professional duty of all educators to engage in Continuous Professional Development," (MoE, 2009, p. 12) and later, "All Ethiopian schools are required to produce School Improvement Plans in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning. CPD is an essential part of school improvement" (MoE, 2009, p. 14). Education Sector Development Programmes (ESDP) designed by MoE highlight the importance of teachers' continuous development in so as to improve students' achievements. ESDP IV focuses on improving student achievement not only by educating teachers, but by enhancing the teaching–learning process and by transforming schools into motivating and child-friendly environments (MOE, 2010a). To achieve this objective, teachers are ex-

pected to implement active learning and student-centred approaches in classrooms (MOE, 2010a).

According to *Continuous Professional Development for Primary and Secondary Teachers, Leaders and Inspectors in Ethiopia. Practical Toolkit* (2009) each school's duty is to identify its CPD needs, produce an annual CPD plan and design and deliver a CPD School Module. CPD is locally based and schools and teachers are responsible for complimenting CPD. The purpose of the CPD is to improve student achievement, improve classroom practice and help teachers to become better teachers by improving their professional competence. Teachers are encouraged to work with at least one other colleague at all times through the process. Every teacher is required to spend at least sixty hours a year on CPD. This can be, for example, attending a workshop, staff meeting or discussion group, observing another teacher, visiting another school or accomplishing team teaching. The schools decide their own activities obligatory for all teachers, and teachers plan their own CPD programmes for the year. The schools are encouraged to use the help of university experts, members of NGOs or the community by implementing their CPD programmes. This was one reason why I was welcomed by educational officers to do research with teachers. Action research, planning lessons together and team teaching are mentioned as methods teachers can carry out in their CPD programmes. Part of this research was the Village School's CPD programme. Teachers had participated before in CPD trainings and workshops provided by the government, but often these had been rather theoretical, and teachers had found it difficult to implement the knowledge in their daily work.

Major criticisms abound in the literature about offering this form of in-service education as the only form of professional development, as traditionally most of these workshops and seminars are "one-shot" experiences, completely unrelated to the needs of teachers and providing no follow-up. (Villegas-Reimers, 2003.) The purposes, design and processes of CPD programmes should mirror the context such as broader socio-political cultures, social histories and working contexts in order to result in effective outcomes (Day & Sachs, 2004).

2.3 Schooling

The current formal education structure in Ethiopia has been in place since 1994. It consists of pre-school, primary and secondary education (Table 4), technical and vocational training, and higher education.

TABLE 4   Schooling structure in Ethiopia

STAGE	GRADES	AGE	
Pre-school	pre-primary, 2 years	ages 4 - 6	voluntary
Primary education	grades 1 - 4 (first cycle)	ages 7 - 10	compulsory
Primary education	grades 5 - 8 (second cycle)	ages 11 - 14	compulsory
Secondary education	grades 9 - 10 (first cycle)	ages 15 - 16	voluntary
Secondary education	grades 11 - 12 (preliminary)	ages 17 - 18	voluntary

Prior to primary education, a small but growing number of children attend kindergarten or pre-school classes. The private sector, NGOs and the community usually invest in the development of pre-school programmes and facilities, and the MoE develops the curriculum, provides supervision, sets standards for facilities, and issues licences for the institutions (UNESCO, 2010/2011). The main objective of compulsory pre-primary education is the all-round development of children in order to prepare them for formal schooling. It is a full-day programme, lasting from 8:00 am to 16:25 pm, consisting of academic subjects like mathematics, languages and physical education, and general subjects like games and community education (UNESCO, 2010/11). Parents prefer private kindergartens because for fees they can offer smaller teaching groups and more quality buildings. Overall, 5.6% of boys and 5.3% of girls attend pre-primary education (UNICEF, 2012). Attending the pre-primary education provides children a better starting point in primary school. In first grade there may be 70 - 80 students in one class taught by only one teacher. Children who have learned the alphabets and numbers at pre-primary survive better in this kind of classroom. Still a large majority of pre-primary aged children and especially children in rural areas do not have access to formal pre-primary education (UNICEF, 2014). The Government has a plan to open "zero (0) class" for children of ages 4 - 6 in all primary schools (EFA, 2015).

Primary education is, by law, free and compulsory. Ethiopia abolished primary school and general secondary school fees in its 1994 Education and Training Policy, as part of the education sector's development strategy (Oumer, 2009). There may still be hidden costs like uniforms and stationary, which are paid by families. Other costs are transportation, costs related to sports and other school activities and school lunches which are not provided by schools. Schools can generate resources from income-generating activities, through government, families, the community and NGOs. The support provided by communities is most often used for maintenance, purchasing furniture, equipment and educational materials. Several NGOs support schools with educational materials, school health programmes, clothing and educational materials for students from poor families. (Oumer, 2009.) Primary school has an official entry age of seven, but many children are likely to enter primary school late, and it is common to see children age 12 - 14 in first grade. This, combined with high repeti-

tion rates, has led to large numbers of over-age children in schools (UNICEF, 2014), early drop-outs and lower levels of educational attainment (MoE, 2012). In the Village School also there were numerous students who were several years over the appropriate age for their grade.

Subjects taught at the first primary education are mother tongue, Amharic, English, mathematics, environmental science, natural science (physics, chemistry and biology), social science, physical education and aesthetic education. In secondary school, English is used as the teaching language in all subjects other than Amharic, and the subjects taught are the same as in primary school, except mother tongue is not taught anymore. Each Regional Education Bureau (REB) can choose which languages are used in their primary schools. Usually teaching is given in the local languages of each area in grades 1 - 4. After 4th grade all the subjects (except Amharic) are taught in English. At the end of grade 4 pupils take a national exam and if they achieve a score of at least 50% they can continue to grade 5. Upon completion of grade 8, pupils sit for the Primary School Certificate Exam. At the end of grade 10, students take the Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate Examination. At the end of grade 12, students must sit for the Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Examination to enter higher education institutions. (UNESCO, 2010/2011.)

There are three options for students who have passed grade 10, depending on the level of their grades. The highest achieving students will attend grades 11 and 12. If they pass grade 12, they are likely to attend university. Students who do not achieve high grades at the end of grade 10 will either go on to Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) or to a College of Teacher Education (CTE) (Sarton et al., 2009). Non-formal education is provided by the government and NGOs, for the children who are not able to attend the regular schools. These children are, for instance, from pastoralist families, or they are working or live on the streets. Adult education also is treated under this Alternative Basic Education. (MoE & UNESCO, 2013; Sarton et al., 2009.)

Most parents recognise that quality education can determine the future life course of their children, and that is very important factor in increasing their choices. Many parents invest in their children's education, expecting that quality education will bring significant transformation in their personal and social development (Serbessa, 2009). When I spoke with parents in rural and urban areas in Ethiopia during this research, I observed that parents considered quality education important. They told me that the private sector is often seen as higher quality than governmental schooling, and they are able to offer better quality teaching materials and school buildings than governmental schools. According to the Village School teachers, private school mostly exist in urban areas, but more and more private schools are established in rural areas and the number of children attending private education is rising rapidly.

As I noted in Chapter 2.2, almost the only teaching methods used at Ethiopian schools traditionally have been lecturing and rote learning. The situation is the same also in many other sub-Saharan African counties. Studies (Soko, 2014) carried out on classroom practices in, for instance, Tanzanian primary

schools show teacher-dominated ways of teaching. Teacher-directed activities such as explaining, questions and answers, writing on the chalkboard, brief answers by individual learners or the whole class answering (chorus) and lesson summaries take much of the lesson time. Lack of teaching materials is one reason leading to lecturing and rote-learning. Textbooks play a big role in classrooms because there are no other resources to support the teachers' work. Many teachers lack knowledge of the subject matter to teach or how to teach the subject matter successfully. Teachers often have a weak subject knowledge base and fail to apply pedagogical content knowledge to the teaching and learning processes. They therefore rely almost entirely on textbooks. (Soko, 2014)

Several researchers (for instance, Bitew, 2008; Dahlström & Lemma, 2008; Lemma, 2006; Tessema, 2008) have raised the question of educational satellite television programmes, or "plasma" as it is commonly known. Students in grades 9 to 12 watch lessons in natural sciences, mathematics, English and civics that are presented on plasma television sets. The role of the teacher is to introduce the topic of the lesson by writing it on the board and then switch the television on. After the transmission the teacher gives a ten-minute summary. Using the plasma television has benefits as well as drawback. Using "plasma" has positive effect on the students' English language listening skills, but the students are passive receivers with no interaction with the teacher (Bitew, 2008). The plasma teachers are foreigners, and their accent is alien to students. The programmes have tasks where the students are supposed to participate actively in their classrooms, but studies (Tessema, 2008) have shown that the level of students' participation when plasma television is used is very low. Plasma television including passivating and uni-directional lectures, is contrary to the officially proclaimed student-centred policy. (Dahlström & Lemma, 2006.) In Bitew's (2008) research, a majority of the participants felt that the quality of Ethiopian education would be improved if the money spent on the live "plasma" transmissions would be used for training teachers and on other resources, such as libraries and laboratories.

2.4 Language policy

Apart from a brief period of occupation, when Italy occupied Ethiopia from 1936 until Ethiopia's sovereignty was recognized in 1941, Ethiopia did not experience the same colonial history as the rest of the region. This enabled Ethiopia to take a different approach to its language policy from other countries in Africa. (Gemechu, 2010; UNICEF, 2016.) The traditional system of education in the nineteenth century was based in the Ge'ez and Amharic languages. From 1908, modern schools began teaching French and Arabic (Ambatchew, 2010; UNICEF, 2016). Nowadays, Amharic is the "lingua franca" and the federal working language, while the other major languages are regional working languages.

Ethiopia is a multilingual and multi-ethnic country with a minimum of 85 ethnic groups and more than 80 languages (Eshetie, 2010). Languages most used in the community are the local languages. The next language of wider communication, where it is not the first language of the region. (Bogale, 2009.) The Amharic language is written with its own script system. Before the current government took power, languages used at schools were Amharic at the elementary level and English in the secondary schools (Alemu & Tekleselassie, 2006). The current language education policy accords high practical status to the first language as a medium of instruction, particularly at the primary level (Bogale, 2009). Primary education is given now by 23 local languages (MoE & UNESCO, 2013). In the Southern Nation, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR), the area where this research was conducted, eight local languages of instruction have been in use at the primary level (Cohen, 2000, as quoted by Alemu & Tekleselassie, 2006).

As stated in Chapter 2.3, English is taught as a separate subject from Grade 1, and Amharic is taught as a subject from either Grade 3 or Grade 5, depending on the region (UNICEF, 2016). The policy for most students, therefore, is trilingual based on their first language, Amharic as the national language, and English as an international language (Bogale, 2009). All universities in the country are supposed to use English as their working language. The teaching of English in the primary first cycle (grades 1 - 4) is done by teachers trained at teacher training institutes (TTIs). They are trained for eight months after completing grade 10. These teachers are expected to teach all subjects to one group of students. English language teaching in primary second cycle (grades 5 - 8) is conducted by teachers who study English as a major field of study or who major in an Ethiopian language and minor in English. English for secondary school students is taught by teachers who have a university degree in English. (Bogale, 2009.)

A study by Ramachandran (2012) assessed the effect of the 1994 language policy change on educational outcomes. The study shows that local language instruction has had a positive effect at all levels of schooling, leading to a 12% increase in the number of students completing six years or more of schooling (UNICEF, 2016). In addition, exercising instruction in the first language closes the gap between home and school language, and increases the commitment of parents to school affairs (Rothstein, 1998, as quoted by Alemu & Tekleselassie, 2006). On the other hand, several studies highlight the challenges concerning language policy in education. According to Bogale (2009), the teaching of English as a subject in the first cycle of primary level is seriously under-resourced. Teachers of his study reported that students had problems understanding lessons in English at grade 5, and "a lot of hard work is required" at that level. A study by Eshetie (2010) claims that the quality of English language education and training in Ethiopia is poor and that students who join colleges and universities are unable to express themselves in English well. According to Tessema (2008) as well, students' oral and written contributions to lessons is very low due to their low levels of English communication competence. According to

Benson (2004), teachers of bilingual classes should be bilingual, meaning reasonably proficient in both languages. They must also be biliterate, so that they can teach reading and writing skills as well as curricular content in both languages. In rural areas of Ethiopia, teachers have only little chances to use English outside of the school, and their spoken and written English skill is often very poor.

In 2010, USAID's EQUIP2 project published a working paper on the relationship between early grade reading and school effectiveness in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras and Nepal (USAID, 2010). At that time, Ethiopia was noted for providing language textbooks for grades 1 to 3 more widely than other countries, although students were observed using these books a very small percentage of the time. The paper noted that very few students read more than 40 words per minute and the largest percentage (36 percent) could not read at all. (UNICEF, 2016.) An Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) for first languages took place in 2010. The assessment found that a significant proportion of grade 2 children were not able to read any questions correctly, between 10% and 70% depending on the region. More than 90% of children in grade 3 were not reading at the expected oral reading fluency rate. Boys succeeded in the assessment better than girls in rural areas, but there was no significant gender difference in urban areas. The most critical factors determining reading ability were found to be access to the language textbook and availability of other reading materials. (MoE & UNESCO, 2013.)

In some areas it is hard to find teachers who are able to teach in the local languages. For instance, in Gambella there is a shortage of teachers who are native speakers of Nuer and Anguak, which are the local languages of the area (Bogale, 2009). Teachers who do not know the language of instruction very well reportedly use Amharic. All students do not speak local languages used at schools because they have migrated from other regions or the whole area consists of mixed communities. These children need to first learn the language used at the primary school, and many non-locals choose to send their children to private English schools (Alemu & Tekleselassie, 2006; Bogale, 2009). In addition, in the area of this research (SNNPR), there is a lack of trained teachers of the local languages. At the Village School, teachers often had to give instructions first in English, then again in the local language because students did not understand the instructions given in English. This also is reinforced in Bogale's (2009) study, where teachers in the area mentioned that using English as a medium creates problems for student understanding, and that they must often interpret into the local language.

2.5   Rural school situation

The question of rural school education is very important, because 83% of Ethiopians live in rural areas (MoE & UNESCO, 2013). Even though the school attendance rate in Ethiopia has risen significantly during the last few decades, the situation is still challenging in many rural areas (Table 5), and the Afar area is still far behind the national average (MoE & UNESCO, 2013). In the whole country, 95.1% of primary school-aged boys and 90.1% of girls attend school (EFA, 2015). In rural areas, 36% of primary school-aged children are still out of school (EPDC, 2014). The percentage of children of secondary school age out of school is 25% in urban areas and 49% in rural areas (EPDC, 2014). The situation is more difficult among pastoralist people like the Afar, where the mobility of families and the culture have an effect on the low rates. Respondents in Woldesenbet's (2015) study clarified the problem in the Afar area: "What is common among most Afar children is to stay with domestic animals in the field and drink their milk as breakfast and lunch. The options in the school should have included provision of consistent school feeding programmes."

TABLE 5   Net enrolment rate by region and sex (Federal Republic of Ethiopia Ministry of Education, "Education Statistics Annual Abstract 2012/13," p. 28)

Region	Boys	Girls	Both
Tigray	91.0	93.1	92.0
Afar	38.9	44.9	41.5
Amhara	90.3	93.1	91.7
Oromia	87.2	80.6	83.9
Somali	82.6	80.8	81.8
Benishangul-Gumuz	98.8	84.4	91.6
SNNPR	92.8	84.9	88.9
Gambella	102.3	93.2	98.0
Harari	80.5	69.1	74.8
Addis Ababa	71.5	67.8	69.4
Dire Dawa	81.3	90.5	85.9
National	87.7	84.1	85.9

In rural areas, a lack of parental encouragement, demands on their time, and the perception that the curriculum is not related to everyday life complicate the education of children (Mulkeen, 2006). Most parents are farmers and many are illiterate. The literacy rate of adults aged 15 years and over is only 30% (UNICEF, 2010). Teachers report that parents often do not understand the importance of education for their children or regular attendance at school. Even when parents understand the importance of schooling, they may be unable to support their children in their learning. According to EFA (2015), increasing adult literacy rates would support other development goals, too. Children with literate parents stay in school longer and achieve more.

Many rural households are dependent on children for help, especially at harvest, but schools usually operate on rigid schedules, both in terms of school hours and term dates. (Mulkeen, 2006.) Child labour is one of the major factors that affect children´s school attendance. A total of 42% of rural children and 29.1% of urban children report that combining work and schooling affects their schooling (MoE, 2012/2013). In Tessema's (2008) AR study in a rural primary school, the teacher students observed learning obstacles, such as school students' minimum motivation, high non-attendance, tardiness, and disinterest. Ferede and Erulkar (2009) interviewed girls who had never been to school and explored why this was occurring. More than half of all girls (57%) reported that their families could not afford schooling. Family disapproval (15%) was next, followed by the burden of domestic responsibilities (10%). Six percent of the girls reported that no school was within easy access of their home. Other reasons for not attending school included marriage (3%), death of parents (2%), lack of interest (2%) and illness (2%). As almost 50 % of adults work in agriculture and forestry, children are needed at home. They help parents in the fields or take care of younger siblings. Household wealth, parental education, dis-

tance to school and household composition have a significant impact on child enrolment (Pereznieto & Jones, 2006).

Most schools in Ethiopia require children to wear uniforms. Families in rural areas are often big and although the education is free, purchasing uniforms, notebooks and pencils is a heavy burden for many families. The EFA report (UNESCO, 2012) found that these "hidden" costs were the primary reasons that parents did not enrol children in school or took them out of school. Tessema (2008) also reflected on the economic and social factors as being responsible for some of the non-attendance problems:

> A great number of students were from rural areas from families whose living was totally dependent on farming. Because of this, the students had to be absent to support their families with the farming activities. In most cases, such students did not have time to study their subjects when they were sometimes able to attend classes. The social factor relates to rituals and social events. Since collective life is the major characteristic of many communities from which the students come, whenever, for example, somebody died, the students have to be absent to mourn. Other religious and cultural celebrations and occasions also force students to be absent.

Rural schools are suffering from the lack of teaching and learning materials. Twenty-one of 33 sub-Saharan African countries reviewed for USAID (2015, p. 10) were found to lack adequate teaching and learning materials, particularly textbooks. Most schools in sub-Saharan African countries do not begin the year with the appropriate number of books for pupils, and most of these schools have to wait at least three months before receiving them. In Ethiopia schools, especially in rural areas, are functioning with very modest facilities. EFA (2015) reported that only 34.4% of primary schools and 71.5% of secondary schools had the availability of water facilities in their compounds. On the other hand, 90% of primary schools and all (100%) secondary schools reported that they have latrines although some of these schools had no separate latrines for boys and girls. (EFA, 2015.) The Village School, for example, functions with no running water or insider lavatory. According to EFA (2015), urgent attention needs to be given to equipping schools with adequate libraries, clinics, pedagogical centres, water facilities, technical and generic laboratories, and separate toilet facilities for girls and boys.

Working as a teacher at sub-Saharan schools is demanding. The schools are over-crowded and under-resourced, teacher housing is insufficient, and salaries are low (Buckler, 2011). Some schools are very large: both primary and secondary schools can cater to up to 5,000 students; 26.5% of primary schools and 34.9% of secondary schools have reported that they have been operating on a double-shift system (EFA, 2015). In Ethiopia, the standard set for a pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) is 50 at the primary (1 - 8) level and 40 at the secondary level. All regions are below the national average except Somali, SNNPR and Oromia, which are above the national average (MoE & UNESCO, 2013). This is especially true in rural areas, where the ratio may be very high, even 70 or more.

Often young, newly graduated teachers are placed in less desirable areas, such as rural or remote schools, and newly qualified young women teachers are at risk in areas away from home. Newly deployed teachers are often allocated

to rural schools, usually the more remote ones (Sarton et al., 2009). Rural schools are also more likely to have less experienced staff. After a number of years of service, a teacher can ask to be moved from his or her current post. Usually, teachers try to be moved to a school in a town because they see the town environment as preferable and the work in urban school as easier. (Sarton et al., 2009.)

2.6 Marginalized children

2.6.1 Children with disabilities

School attendance and quality of education has improved in the whole country, and according to the EFA report (2015), the situation of the disadvantaged and deprived groups and of the emerging regions has advanced more rapidly than the average. As a result, disparities have become less sharp, but the situation is still one for concern. (EFA, 2015).

It is estimated that 3.2% of primary-aged children in Ethiopia are disabled (MoE, 2012), although the statistics on children and people with disabilities in many sub-Saharan countries are not trustworthy because many of them, especially girls and women, are not officially registered (Katsui, Lehtomaki, Malle & Chalken, 2016; Okkolin, Lehtomäki & Bhalalusesa, 2010). In 2013, there were 13 special schools and 302 special classes in Ethiopia (Mulat, Savolainen, Lehtomäki & Kuore, 2015). Almost 97% of disabled children remain unserved by the education system, often remaining out of school (MoE 2012). Some schools do not accept children with disabilities to the school or they are not taken to the school because of insufficient support systems, or parents do not see educating them as important. In Ethiopia, as in many other sub-Saharan African and low-income countries, society still holds negative attitudes and cultural beliefs characterizing disabilities. (Katsui et al., 2016; Mulat, 2011; Tirussew, 2005.) Disabilities are associated with sin, shame and feelings of guilt, and disability is considered as a curse. Parents may be ashamed of the child with a disability and may undermine the child's potential to learn, and children with disabilities are hidden at home. (Katsui et al., 2016; Keski-Mäenpää, 2013; Tirussew, 2006.) In regular schools there are children with hidden disabilities, such as mild visual or auditory impairments, development delays, or communication difficulties. In most cases, these children remain undetected, and are left without support programmes. (Tirussew, 2006.)

During the last four decades, the education of children with disabilities such as blindness and deafness was provided by special schools begun by overseas missionaries (Tirussew, 2006). The policies of the MoE (2002, 2010a) emphasize that special attention must be given to education of disadvantaged groups, such as girls, pastoralists and children with disabilities. Efforts were made to make the content and the organization of education more relevant to the diversified needs of the population; for instance, through the introduction

of Alternative Basic Education and the strengthening of innovative models such as mobile schools. (EFA, 2015.)

The widespread nationwide movement towards special classes in regular schools is part of the inclusive education movement, and in Ethiopia special classes for hearing impaired children have been established to governmental schools all over the country (Keski-Mäenpää, 2013; Mulat, 2011). Giving access to education for children with disabilities hopefully will encourage and motivate the parents of children with disabilities to send their children to schools instead of leaving them at home. (Tirussew, 2006.) There are still many obstacles in educating children with disabilities; for instance, the teachers do not have training in special needs education, schools have not yet been equipped with the necessary resources and facilities, and the pupil-teacher ratio is too large to give enough attention to a child with a disability (Mulat et al., 2015; Tirussew, 2006).

According to a study by Mulat (2011), most of the regular class teachers do not know sign language or understand the communicational needs of deaf and hard of hearing children. This situation has created a challenge for most hearing impaired students in continuing their schooling. Due to a lack of appropriate support, more specifically support in sign language and communication, hearing impaired children find learning very difficult in an environment that demands hearing, and many of them are forced to drop out of school (Mulat, 2011; Mulat et al., 2015). At the Village School, the number of children with disabilities were not compiled statistics. Teachers told me that there were two deaf students at the school, but they did not know about other kinds of disabilities among the students. One of the teachers said that he used some simple signs, but other teachers did not know any signs. Later, we purchased books for hearing impaired students to make sure that they were able to follow the teaching in the classroom.

2.6.2 Educating girls

Much like the situation of children with disabilities, the gender issue is highlighted in MoE policies and one of the cross-cutting programmes in ESDP IV (MoE, 2010a). The gap between boys and girls has continued to decline, but regional disparities continue to be large. In urban areas, the net attendance ratio of girls to boys at primary schools is almost equal, and improvement in girls' attendance rates has been remarkable. While the Amhara, Tigray, Addis Ababa, Somali, and Gambella regions are closing the gender gap in primary education, regions like Benishangul-Gumuz and Harari are still far behind. (Beyene, 2015; MoE & UNESCO 2013.) In addition, the number of female drop-outs is high, especially in the transition from primary to secondary education. Areas like SNNPR, Oromia and Gambella have higher dropout rates than the national average for both boys and girls. In Tigray, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz and Gambella, boys dropped out at a higher rate than girls, whereas in Afar, SNNPR, Harari and Dire Dawa, girls dropped out at a higher rate than boys. The Afar region had the highest dropout rate for girls (15%) as opposed to

10.3% for boys (Beyene, 2015; MoE, 2012/2013). The drop-out rate in the area of this research, SNNPR, is one of the highest in the country: 19.6% of boys and 20.5% of girls leave the school before completing the nine grades of primary school. Dropout rates at the primary level in the whole country vary by grade level. Grades 1, 5, and 8 have the highest dropout rates, and grade 3 the lowest. Among first-graders, 22.7% drop out before reaching grade 2 (MoE, 2012/2013).

Poverty is one of the main barriers against girls' and women's education. Socio-cultural factors such as social norms and traditional practices regarding the roles and positions of women in Ethiopian society, gender-based violence, early marriage and teenage pregnancy affect girls' and women's access to and completion of education. (UNESCO, 2012.) Other school-related barriers to girls' participation in education consist of poor quality of the learning environment, irrelevant curricula, long distance between home and school, and shortage of female teachers as role models (Okkolin et al., 2010).

The legal age of marriage in Ethiopia is 18, but 41% of girls get married before the age of 18, and 16% by the age of 15 (UNICEF, 2014). There are also various school-related factors affecting educational opportunities for girls, such as the long distances to schools, the lack of motivated and gender-sensitive teachers and female-friendly school environments (UNESCO, 2012). The fifth EFA goal of full gender equality in education emphasizes a schooling environment that is free of discrimination and provides equal opportunities for boys and girls to realize their potential. Other starting points towards gender equality include making sure the school environment is safe, for example, by offering separate latrines for girls and boys, training teachers in gender sensitivity, achieving gender balance among teachers, and rewriting curricula and textbooks to remove gender stereotypes. (EFA, 2015.)

2.6.3   Nomadic children

Although the school attendance ratio in Ethiopia has increased significantly, the situation of nomadic/pastoralist children in Ethiopia is still challenging. The pastoralists' mobility is an inherent lifestyle and their means of survival. Mobility is mainly in search of water and pastures. Pastoralist groups are found in six regions in Ethiopia: Afar, Oromia, Somali, SNNPR, Gambela and Benishangul Gumuz (Figure 2); they cover 65% of the total area of the country and represent more than 10% of the population. Due to their location, pastoralists are affected by frequent conflicts with fellow pastoralists across the borders. Pastoralists are economically, politically and socially marginalized groups. (Woldesenbet, 2015.)

FIGURE 2   Pastoralist areas of Ethiopia (The Open University, 2017)

Because of these groups' mobility it is difficult to create a system of education for nomadic children, and a large number of school-aged children in Ethiopia are still out of school in the pastoralist regions (Woldesenbet, 2015). For instance, in the Afar region 55.5% of lower primary (grades 1 - 4) and 92% of upper primary (grades 5 - 8) school-aged children are not in school. Although improvement has been seen in the case of Somalis, 23.3% of lower primary and 88.6% of upper primary school-aged children in that region are out of school (MoE, 2012/13). Reasons for high number of nomadic children out of school are, for instance, poverty and attitudes of pastoralist parents towards education. Fear of alienation and distortions of traditional cultural values have led to resistance to modern education among some pastoral communities (Carr-Hill & Peart, 2005; Woldesenbet, 2015). The early marriages of girls in some regions and long distances to the schools are also reasons for low school attendance in nomadic areas (Woldesenbet, 2015).

3 METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I will take a closer look into action research as a research tool, describe the research process and my role in it, the research context and the participants. I will also tell how we collected the data and how it was analysed. The ethical questions also will be considered. More detailed descriptions of action research cycles will be provided in Chapters 4 - 7.

3.1 Practice-changing practice

This study is a qualitative case study and the research approach is practical; its goal was to develop new teaching methods in co-operation with one village school teachers. Therefore, action research (AR) was chosen as the research approach. There are many definitions of AR. All of them include some common features, like better understanding, improvement, reform, problem-solving, step-by-step process and modification (Koshy, 2006). The definitions emphasize the practical nature of AR and the commitments of all stakeholders. There are several approaches to AR, like industrial action research, action science, participatory action research (PAR), classroom action research and critical participatory action research. This research is a practical action research, which aims for improvements in practice and in a real context. (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014.) This research has features both of participatory action research, in that has been conducted mostly in co-operation with teachers, and classroom action research, where teachers try to solve challenges they have faced in their working contexts.

Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon (2014) describe AR as a practice-changing practice. It is a systematic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems they confront in their everyday lives (Stringer, 2007). The practical starting point of this study was the MoE's demand for teachers to start using student-centred teaching methods throughout the country in order to improve students' achievements. Action research, like this research, combines the theory with practices. It involves the investigation of actual practices and learning about real, material, concrete, particular practices of particular people in particular places (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014).

Other key feature of AR is its participatory nature. Participatory action researchers "are more interested in walking shoulder to shoulder with ordinary people rather than one step ahead" (Swantz, 2008, 31). Doing participatory action research is doing research *with* people, not *on* people. In this research it meant planning, implementing and reflecting upon the whole process together with the participants. According to Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon (2014), one of the most important things that happens in participatory action research is that participants get together and talk about their work and lives. It brings people together to reflect and act on their own social and educational practices, the way they understand their practices, and the conditions under which they practice. Those who might otherwise be subjects of research become co-researchers. In this research my goal was to do whole research with the participants, and it succeeded especially in the last cycles. My role in this research was more like a facilitator who supported and encouraged the Village School teachers to act in order to solve the problems they faced in their everyday work.

This research has ethnographic features, like action research and ethnography often do because of their common epistemologies and methods (Sykes & Treleaven, 2009). The main data collection tools in ethnographic research are

different forms of observation, discussions and interviews, as also in this research. Both are used in the educational field in a practical, real context and directly in everyday life. Both methods are often based on participatory observation and require time to undertake quality research. This research was conducted in real situations in a genuine context, and I stayed rather long times in the field. I tried to experience the reality of an Ethiopian rural school and see how teachers worked. I assisted as a substitute teacher any time one of the teachers was absent, simply to understand the reality of what it was to teach 80 students in a classroom with nothing more than a chalkboard and chalk. Ethnographic and action research definitely have some uncertainty in their approaches, and this is also what makes doing such research fascinating. Many elements are unpredictable. According to the action research cycle, every action is planned during the cycle (plan, action, observe, reflect), and at the beginning of the research it was not possible to know in which direction the research would go. AR has a defined starting point, but an unknown destination (Meyer, Hamilton, Kroeger, Stewart & Bryden-Miller, 2004).

The challenge of qualitative research, such as like action research and ethnographic research, is in its subjectivity. The researcher is an active member of the research, and thus influences the research and participants as a subjective member. In action research it is often problematic separating the action and the research. (Eskola & Suoranta, 2008.). For me, being part of the community meant contributing to the actions at the school. I was not an outsider observer, but an active part of the action research with the teachers. I, as well as teachers, influenced what happened at the school. My observations are subjective as well. My pre-assumptions, previous experiences, cultural background and knowledge that I had gained by reading articles related to education in Ethiopia affected the details that I saw and considered meaningful. To avoid false interpretations, I have discussed my experiences and thoughts with Ethiopian teachers and educational professionals several times during the research process. This research could have been very different if the teachers had not trusted me or I had not been able to speak their language (Amharic), or had not known how to behave in a culturally suitable way, which helped me to be accepted among the teachers and the students.

3.1.1 Action research spiral

Action research is usually seen as steps, which follow each other. Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) present action research as a spiral of activity: plan, act, observe and reflect. This means planning a change, acting and observing the process and consequences of the change, reflecting on these processes and consequences, and then replanning, acting and observing again. (Koshy, 2008). This may be presented in other ways too, like look, think, act (Stringer, 2007), but always following action in a spiral. This research followed Kemmis's and McTaggart's (2000) model of the action research cycle (Figure 3).
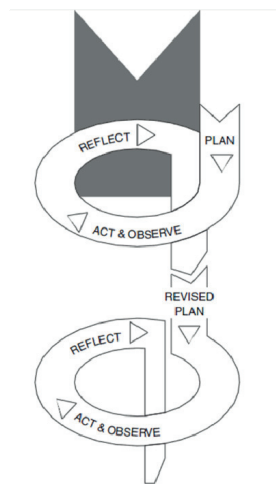
FIGURE 3   Action research spiral (Kemmis & McTaggart 2000)

The spiral is not only a mechanical list of different stages of research, but it is more like a spiral of reflective cycles. For critical participatory action research, the criterion of success is not whether participants have followed the steps faithfully, but whether they have a strong and authentic sense of development and evolution in their practices, their understandings of their practices, and the situations in which they practice. (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014.)

Our AR process followed the stages described by Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon (2014): **Planning** is made collectively by all participants. It includes describing the concerns about the current situation and the changes that the participants plan to make, outlining the schedule of activities, describing how the changes are monitored and a preliminary view about how the evidence that will be collected might allow the participants to reflect productively on what happened when the group made the changes it did.

Stage of **action** means enacting or implementing the plan made beforehand. At the same time, it is important to monitor what happens as the plan is put into action. Sometimes the plan does not function, the plan will not have envisaged all of the circumstances in which it is enacted and the plan has to be modified.

The stage of **observing** includes discussing the process and making a synthesis of what has happened. At the same time as the evidence is organized, the analysing and interpreting begins.

Reflecting means discovering what happened, reviewing what has happened in relation to felt concerns, reconsidering the opportunities and constraints of the situation, reviewing the achievements and limitations of changes in practice and considering the consequences (anticipated and unanticipated effects, intended and unintended effects and side effects). This stage is also the time to begin thinking about implications for future action.

In doing qualitative research, and especially in action research, the research plan is formulated during the research process. This research also has been flexible. It was built stage by stage according to participant needs and plans. As a researcher, I was not able to plan the research beforehand, nor did I even know the topic of the action when I entered the school for the first time. The interpretation also took place during the whole research process, in the growing understanding about the context and phenomena at the Village School. During the research, some other issues arose from out of our initial focus. For example, our plan was not to improve the situation of students with disabilities, but during the research, while I was observing the class, I realized that there were two deaf students among the other students. This caused a discussion with teachers and also some actions that may be considered as side spirals. These side spirals were not part of the planned activities, but came up during the research.

3.1.2   Action research in a school context

The idea of action research was initially introduced by Lewin in the 1940s and Corey around 1953. Later, Stenhouse (1975) suggested that work of the teachers should be researched by teachers themselves. He felt that research should be supported and guided by the use of professional researchers who would choose the focus for the research (McAteer, 2013). Elliott suggested that either the teacher could carry out the research or could commission someone else to do it. He focused on the relationship between theory and practice and stated that theories are not validated independently and then applied to practice, but validated through practice (Elliot 1981).

Professional development in AR is perceived as a process that takes place within a particular context. The most effective form of teachers' professional development is based in schools and is related to the daily activities of teachers and learners. (Villegas-Reimers, 2003) AR concerns not only action, but also transforming peoples´ practices, their understandings of their practices and the conditions under which they practice (Kemmis, 2010). Deepened understanding of the practices and the conditions under which teachers practice has an effect to teachers' professional development. AR supports teachers´ professional development in a collaborative way, and it has been found to be an effective model for such development because it is inquiry-based, and allows teachers to investigate their own worlds. Teachers are considered not only as professionals who consume the knowledge created by "expert researchers," but as creators of that knowledge. (Villegas-Reimers, 2003.)

AR theories and practices have been used, for example, to support pedagogical, curriculum and educational reform all over the world. In Singapore and Japan, for instance, action research has been used as a state-sponsored means of reforming schooling. (Somekh & Zeichner, 2009.) Universities in many countries are working in partnership with schools and governments to use AR as a strategy for educational reform. Often this is through innovative projects involving school–university partnerships, or through the work of graduate stu-

dents who carry out AR in their own schools as part of higher degree studies. (Somekh & Zeichner, 2009.) Action research also has been used for developing education in various sub-Saharan African countries. AR projects have been conducted, for instance, in South Africa to promote constructivist learning environments (Aldridge, Fraser & Sebela, 2004) and to support professionalism of mathematics teachers (Adler, 2007). In Ethiopia, for instance, an AR project was carried out in collaboration with one of the primary school teachers and the Debre Markos College of Teacher Education (Worku, 2017). The objectives of the AR were to develop practitioners' action research knowledge, skills, and confidence; to enable practitioners to identify classroom problems and solve them through action research projects; and to improve the school-college linkage between primary schools and colleges of teacher education. The AR lasted seven months and included four phases and actions, such as training about AR strategies and planning of AR projects. Evaluation showed that the perception and confidence of practitioners towards AR was improved, that they were acquainted with the basic knowledge and skills of action research, that the practice of AR was improved at the school and that some educational problems in the school were solved. The school-college linkage was also improved. Action research projects have been conducted additionally by NGOs, like that in Gonder, where the aim of AR was to provide primary education for excluded groups of children (Shenkuti & Licht, 2005). Their research showed that action research projects increased teacher collaboration in environments where teachers have usually worked in isolation.

In Ethiopia, not only the schools but also the teacher training institutes are encouraged to perform AR projects with the students. For instance, in Degago's (2012) research conducted at Haramaya University in Ethiopia, the student teachers remarked that their involvement in action research helped them to understand better the complexities involved in teaching. In Tessema's (2008) AR conducted in an Ethiopian village school, he found that student teachers' potential to change and reflect on their activities can be positively influenced by the opportunities created in teacher education programmes. An action research project with eight teacher students supported the students' collaboration and capability to reflect on their own actions as teachers. Action research projects with teacher students during their practicum would be one solution to support SCL methods at the schools, and would prepare students for use of these methods at work later.

According to the MoE (2009), AR is considered a cost-effective inquiry for improving schools practices, ensuring the quality and improving students' learning outcomes. Much attention is given to the concept and practice of action research in policy documents (MoE, 2007), but according to Worku (2017), the actual practice of action research in Ethiopian schools is at its lowest stage, and there is "a substantial rhetoric-reality gap in the status and practice of action research in Ethiopian schools." AR is a widely phrased but poorly understood and practiced concept in the Ethiopian school context. (Worku, 2017.)

3.2   Research process and the participants

This action research included four cycles. They followed the spiral consisting of planning, acting, observing and reflecting as described in Chapter 3.1.1. Often these steps changed places, processes were repeated and we had to re-think our interpretations. This is the feature that makes the action research process fluid, open and responsive. (Koshy, 2008.) The action was planned by the Village School teachers. Activities of each cycle are presented in Figure 4, and are given in more detail in Chapters 4 - 7.
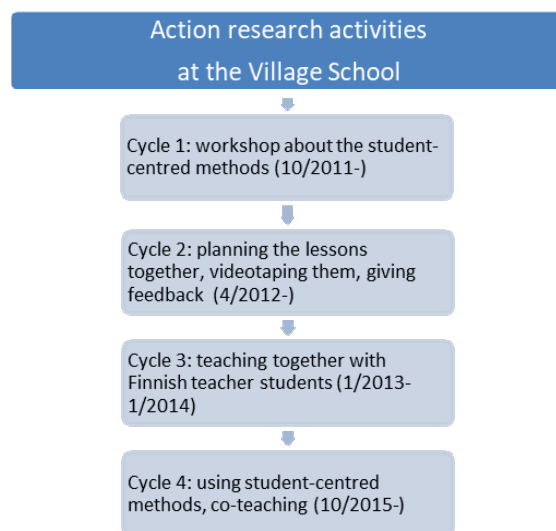
FIGURE 4   Action research activities at the Village School

The first cycle began in October, 2011 and the final discussion was held in June, 2015. A more detailed timetable is presented in Chapter 1.2. I usually stayed 3 to 5 days at a time at the school. The exception to this was during the third cycle, which included the co-teaching of the Finnish teacher students and the Village School teachers. I stayed with the Finnish teacher students at the school for the entirety of five weeks in 2013 and 2014. I lived at the guest house in the next town and travelled by local bus or by my own car. Living in the village would not have been possible, because there are no hotels or guest houses there. At the time between my visits some action related to student-centred teaching took place at the school, but the most active times were during my visits or the visits of the Finnish teacher students'. Like one of the teachers described: "When you are here, I feel we are more active and better teachers than in other times. You should come here more often."

Participants of this study are 23 teachers of the Village School (Appendix 1). Because the data include sensitive subjects and I wanted to ensure that participating in the research would not harm them, teachers and the school have been given pseudonyms. All teachers participated in the research's first, second and third cycles. The third cycle consisted of collaboration between Finnish and Ethiopian teachers, and 14 Village School teachers participated in the co-teaching. All teachers took part in the group discussions, but individual interviews and discussions were voluntary. Three key-informants (Fekede, Abraham and Taddese) participated in the fourth cycle, which was led by them individually.

The number of female and male participants and their teaching class levels are presented in Table 6. The participants are the teachers of grades 1 - 8. Teachers of the grades 9 and 10 did not participate this research because those classes were established during the research.

TABLE 6　　　　　Teachers at the Village School

Level	Female	Male	Total
Primary 1 - 4	5	4	9
Secondary 5 - 8	7	7	14
High school 9 - 10	4	18	22
Total	16	29	45

As described in Chapter 2.3.1, teachers in Ethiopia are currently trained and recruited at two levels, depending on whether they will teach at the primary or secondary level. In rural areas like the village of this research, most of the secondary school teachers have completed diploma level training. During this research, one secondary teacher received a Master's degree and another other teacher started to upgrade his studies during the vacation interval (Table 7). The salary of teachers with Master's degree is higher, and often they are transferred to higher positions in education administration.

TABLE 7　　　　　Teachers' qualifications at the Village School

	Diploma	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree
Primary 1 - 4	9 (100%)	-	-
Secondary 5 - 8	10 (71 %)	4 (29 %)	-
High school 9 - 10	-	21 (95 %)	1 (5 %)

The number of the participants in this research was quite small, which is common to qualitative research. The criteria do not include the number of participants, but rather the quality of research and the gaining of a deep understanding (Eskola & Suoranta, 2008), which was the goal of this research as well. Deep understanding about the researched issue was gained by discussions with education experts in Ethiopia, in reading research connected to the issue and through two kinds of analysis.

3.3 The Village School

> The school consists of several buildings. Lower grades are located in older buildings which are made of clay. Secondary school functions in newer buildings, made of cement. They have windows made of glass, while old buildings do not have windows. Houses are surrounded by high eucalyptus trees and a few acacias. There is a garden surrounded by a fence. I recognize corn crowing high and cabbages. It's not for students, school does not provide lunch, but school gets some income by selling the products. School yard is large and wide, with long grass and hundreds of students sitting under the trees or moving from one classroom to another. Its midday and rather warm. (My diary, 28.1.2012)

The setting of this research is a rural village in the southern part of Ethiopia. The regional state is called Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR). The whole surrounding area is pastoral, with huts made of clay and grass, only a little traffic, lots of donkeys and other household animals. The village is beside the road with a few small shops, two schools, a cafeteria and a pharmacy. There is no mobile network or facilities like markets or restaurants in the village. The round cottages are surrounded false banana trees, which are the main source of food in the area, along with grain called *tef*. Donkeys, horses and goats walk freely in the streets. Most of the pupil's parents are farmers. Some of the teachers live in the village, but the majority live in the town nearby. Some of them walk several kilometres daily to the school.

The Village School is one of the two schools in the village. When I started this research in 2011, the school had only grades 1 through 8. They had applied several times for the permission to add grades 9 and 10 but had not received it. The permission was given in 2013. The Village School is now the only school providing teaching at this level in the area. The number of students in grades 9 and 10 is very high because many students from the surrounding area come to the Village School to study there. Students go to school in two shifts, a morning shift and an evening shift, because of the large number of students and the small space available in the classrooms.

TABLE 8   Number of students at the Village School

Grade	Female	Male	Total
1	61	58	119
2	59	56	115
3	60	50	110
4	56	49	105
5	66	60	126
6	47	38	85
7	31	27	58
8	33	30	63
9	189	250	439
10	166	183	349
	Total 768	Total 801	Total 1569

The school area consists of several separate buildings. The older ones are made of clay and have no electricity. The newer buildings are made of cement and have one electronic socket per room. Two to four students sit on the same bench. In each classroom there is a chalkboard and in the external walls of the buildings there are paintings made by local artists. These paintings are for teaching purpose and demonstrate, for example, the maps of the world, Africa or Ethiopia, or human anatomy.

I sit at the back of the classroom. It is first grade's Amharic lesson. There are more than 70 students and one teacher. Four students sit at the same bench using one or two text books together. It is surprisingly quiet, children are listening carefully and not disturbing in any way. Teacher asks simple questions and children answer with one or two words, in unison. The building is older one, lot of dust flying in the air and it is quite dark in the classroom because walls are of clay and windows are very small. No-one has eyeglasses, I wonder if all children are able to see the text on the chalkboard. But the teacher is talking very clearly, using child-friendly language, and has very nice contact to children. Students are very active, raising their hands eagerly. (My diary, 30.1.2012)

Teachers have a small recreation room with a table, benches and a television. They have a short (10 - 15 min.) tea break, and they spend it often by playing chess and conversing. The school buildings are surrounded by trees and grass. There is also a modest football field and a volleyball net. In the garden there is a tea hut with no walls; its roof is made of grass. This building serves as a meeting place for staff, as is described in Chapter 7.4.

The culture in the area of SNNPR, similarly to other cultures in Ethiopia, is strongly based on social values. The social structure is very hierarchical. Elders are highly respected. The majority of residents in the village are Christians

(Protestant and Orthodox), although some Muslims also reside. Even though according to the statistics there are not members of traditional religions in the area, many old beliefs are mixed with newer religions. For example, I was told that when a child is sick, parents may seek help from a traditional healer in the village. The relationships among different religious and ethnic groups in the village are very peaceful according to the teachers. The biggest challenge in the area, as in the whole country, is inflation and rapid increase in prices. The lack of rains affect the wellbeing of families in the village occasionally. The area is famous for using the false banana tree for nutritional purposes, which helps people during the dry seasons.

3.4   Data collection

Data for this research consists of material collected through various kinds of methods (Appendix 3). These methods were group discussions with all 23 teachers, focus group discussions with smaller groups, interviews with individual teachers, my field notes of observed lessons and videotapes. If the discussions were not recorded, I made the notes afterwards. My own diary notes and samples of Finnish teacher students' trainee reports are used to illustrate the process to the reader but they were not analysed. The trainee reports of the Finnish students focused mainly on their own professional development and did not bring new knowledge for my research tasks. Therefore I decided not to analyse the reports.

The photos have been added to the paper to give the reader a better understanding of the research setting. These photos were not taken at the Village School, but they represent the context of Ethiopian rural areas.

3.4.1   Discussions

Two kind of discussions were conducted in this research; group discussions with all 23 teachers, and focus group discussions with smaller groups of teachers (usually 2 to 3 teachers at a time). My plan before going to the Village School was to collect information for the first cycle by individual interviews. The nature of qualitative research and action research is flexible, and I had to change my plan on my first day at the school. The teachers were unfamiliar to me, and I was considered an outsider and a foreigner. Teachers preferred discussions in groups. Even if that was not my original plan, it is suitable for the action research, which is a project made by teachers together. Discussing the challenges at the school was more convenient to do together. Group interview or discussion is a commonly used data collection method in action research due to its collective nature. Eskola and Suoranta (2008) suggest the use of group interview or discussion, for example, when interviewees are too excited to be interviewed individually. In groups, the participants may share memories, support and encourage each other.

Some more official group discussions, like the first discussion in the first cycle, were held in teachers' recreation room, around the big table. In that session, my aim was to interfere as little as possible with the discussion. I gave teachers the theme, which was "challenges at the Village School," and asked them to talk about it. The first discussions were conducted in rather big groups (8+7+8 teachers) because of the time limit, but later the focus group discussions of the project were done in smaller groups of 2 to 3 teachers at a time. These focus group discussions were often very unofficial and unstructured, held after the lessons in the classroom or in the garden. Some discussion were conducted in cafeteria next to the school. The majority of them were recorded or written down right after the discussion. The discussions concerned teachers' feelings and thoughts about their or the Finnish teacher students' lessons. I did not want to guide the discussions and usually I simply asked, "What do you think about the lesson?" Most of this kind of informal discussions was pretty short; 3 - 7 minutes.

I also did a few structured individual interviews about themes, like career stories and future plans of teachers. With individual interviews, I wanted to get a deeper understanding about certain issues and to hear more from some teachers. The topics of these interviews came up during the research process and were not planned beforehand. Discussions and interviews were mostly in Amharic, although some of them were in English. Teachers had a chance to choose which language they preferred. I transcribed the interviews to English, and Ethiopian assistants translated the Amharic interviews. Transcribing the tapes was very difficult, because sometimes teachers overlapped each other's speech, changed language in the middle of sentences or discussed in the local language, which was unfamiliar to me.

3.4.2 Observation and field notes

I followed about 30 lessons from various teachers in different subjects and class levels. Part of the lessons were taught together by Ethiopian teachers and the Finnish teacher students. Six lessons were videotaped, which made it possible to make notes afterwards. A lot of photos were also taken. I did not have any pre-written plan for my observations, because I wanted to take a more open-ended approach and to capture as many aspects of the teaching and the school context as possible. Part of the observation was participatory. I attended the lessons, discussed with teachers and students during them and afterwards, or helped as an assistant teacher in the classroom. I made the notes afterwards at the teachers' recreation room or, if that was not possible, later at the guest house.

I made two types of notes. Field notes are made during the lessons or after the discussions with teachers. These notes are more like ethnographic notes: thick descriptions, for example, about material, human and learning surroundings at the Village School or detailed notes of the discussions. These notes are part of the data. The second type of notes were my researcher diary notes made after school days at the guesthouse. These notes describe my feelings and

thoughts. I have kept the diary since I was a child, and this was a very natural way to make notes. These diary notes, as well as the final reports of the Finnish teacher students and the photos, were used in the research to illustrate the process.

Direct observation was used to explore what kind of teaching methods were used in the classrooms. It is also the main tool in helping the researcher to understand the context within which research activities occur (Radnor, 2002). It was used as a supportive technique to verify the data collected via group discussions and individual interviews. By direct observation, I mean the lessons where I was sitting at the back of the classroom and not attending the activities in any way. This kind of class observation offered opportunities to explore the teachers' behaviours and teaching methods in what would be a natural setting for them as teachers. It enabled the opportunity of seeing them in action and provided a chance to see things teachers did not necessary bring up in the discussions. The focus of the observation was on the teachers' activities and classroom context. In order not to interfere with the lessons, I sat at the back of the class when I did the observation and took the field notes. Very soon the students got used to me and paid no attention. Teachers admitted, however, that my presence affected their teaching, made them try more and to pay more attention than usual to their teaching methods. Videotaping was conducted at the back of the classrooms as well. I was aware that my personal expectations and experiences might have distorted the obtained information and the interpretation of the classroom events. To avoid that I discussed usually about the lessons with teachers afterwards. These discussions helped me to understand their teaching and their actions from their own perspectives and contexts, and offered teachers a chance to reflect on their teaching.

At the same time, I am well aware of the restrictions. Very often I was tired, hungry or sweaty because of the heat, and all of these affected my capability to observe carefully. Also my cultural lenses, previous experiences and pre-assumptions affect the details I as a researcher see and consider as important or not important. Therefore, observation is always subjective and human (Eskola & Suoranta, 2008), and all description represents choices and judgments to some degree – decisions about what to put down and the exact words to use (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). In this study the primary source of data were discussions and interviews. Field notes in this research are seen "as the written account what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, pp. 110 - 111). My goal was to collect rich data that included descriptions of teachers and their work, dialogues, relationships, physical settings and activities. These represented the cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements at the school, which were analysed after the data collection.

3.5   Analysis

The interpretation was a creative, constant process and went on during all of the cycles. It was hermeneutic: my understanding about the context and phenomena were deepened during the process. The more I observed, discussed with Ethiopian researchers and read theories, the more I understood. Two kinds of analyses were undertaken: first, a thematic analysis that identified key themes; and second, an analysis using a theoretical framework that focused on the discursive, material and social conditions (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008; Kemmis & Heikkinen, 2012) that enabled and constrained using the student-centred teaching methods at the Village School.

This research was an abductive process and pragmatic by its nature. The goal and action of the AR was not planned beforehand, and I chose the analysis methods and theories that supported my analysis during the process. After analysing the data thematically, I felt I did not understand the data deeply enough and cultural views were especially not considered enough in my analysis. After analysing the first and second cycles I visited Australia and had a change to discuss my data with professor Stephen Kemmis. He introduced me to the theory of practise architectures, which helped me to examine more effectively the doings, sayings and relatings that construct the practices at the Village School. Understanding how the practical arrangements at the school affect to teachers' capabilities in using student-centred methods emerged in discussions with the teachers, careful reading of the data and other research done in Ethiopia.

Action research is subjective and the researcher is an active participant during the whole research process. As I described in Chapter 3.2, I was not able to remove my own way of seeing from the process, but my aim has been to engage reflexively in the process and to be aware of my interpretive framework (Radnor, 2002). My experiences affect the way in which I analyse and interpret the data, what I observe and to what I give no attention.

The data of this research are not considered as a descriptions, but description about the experiences and feelings of teachers. The "truth" and reality are being created at the same time that we planned the project, acted upon and discussed it. Group discussion was a good example of creating the reality and building understanding together. One teacher started to talk about a certain subject, and his speech sparked ideas among other teachers. They continued the talk, I asked a question, which brought up new ideas, etc. Therefore, the process and interpreting is not only collecting the data and analysing them, but creating new understanding together, collectively. Often, when I tried to understand some cultural issue at the school, we discussed it in a group and so made interpretation together. This is typical for action research because of its participatory nature.

Thematic content analysis

All discussions, interviews and my field notes were first analysed thematically (Eskola & Suoranta, 2008; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). The analysis of discussions and interviews began by transcribing the English spoken and recorded data after each action research cycle. At this stage I did not reduce the data. Those interviews that were held in Amharic, were translated and transcribed by the Ethiopian assistant. Because I am able to understand Amharic, I listened and checked those tapes again to make sure I understood them the same way as the person who had translated it. This process of listening to the tapes, reading and re-reading the transcripts helped me to become familiar with the whole data and to raise up a wider range themes.

For instance, challenges brought up by teachers in the first cycle were coded and then listed. These are presented in Chapter 4.3. I arranged the challenges in wider themes, and then reduced the data. I concentrated on my research tasks and left out irregular themes. Organizing the data was an inductive process. I did not start with ready-made categories within the main topics but allowed them to be identified in the data. Thematic analysis enabled me to identify the essential topics and themes, become familiar with the data and carry out a closer and more detailed exploration.

Theory of practice architectures as an analysis method

After the thematic content analysis, I analysed the whole data again through the theory of practice architectures (for example, Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008; Kemmis & Heikkinen, 2012). This theory aims to explain how social and educational practices are constituted in relation to the particular cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements that support them. It has been used, for example, in Australia to research leading and mentoring practices (Bristol & Wilkinson, 2014), and in Finland to examine peer-group mentoring for teacher development (Heikkinen, Jokinen & Tynjälä, 2012) According to this theory, practices are organized as bundles of "sayings," "doings," and "relatings" that "hang together" (Kemmis, Heikkinen, Fransson, Aspfors & Edwards-Groves, 2014; Shatzki, 2002). According to this theory all practices are composed in three dimensions (Figure 5). These dimensions are (1) the semantic dimension (in which it is possible to say things and be understood); (2) the dimension of physical space-time (in which it is possible to carry out relevant activities); and (3) the social-political dimension (in which it is possible to relate appropriately to others in the practice).
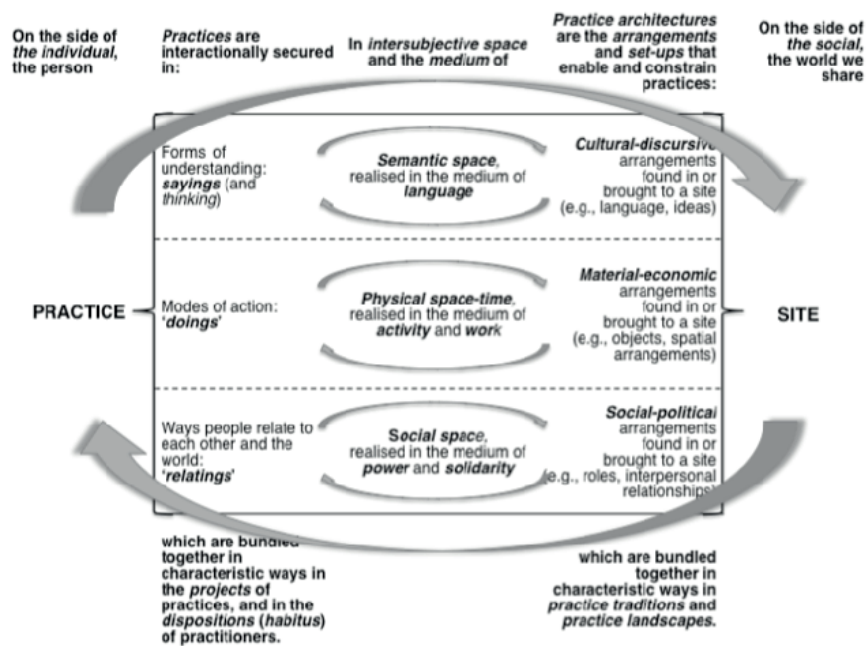
FIGURE 5   Theory of practice and practice architectures (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014, p. 38)

These three elements of *practice architectures* prefigure and shape the distinctive sayings, doings and relatings characteristic of a particular practice. For instance, the practices at the school and changes in them are enabled by practice architectures. These architectures do not predetermine the practice, but they enable or constrain it (Kemmis, Heikkinen et al., 2014). When sayings, doings and relatings support the practice, change is possible. These three dimensions are often impossible to separate from each other (Figure 6). We think of "school," for example, in terms of shared language and shared ways of thinking about things. We also think of "school" in terms of shared spaces (classrooms, desks) and the various activities (teaching, doing sports) that compose its daily rhythms. We think of school in terms of a range of interconnected relationships between teachers, students and parents. "School" appears as some kind of whole, composed of a distinctive and overlapping semantic space, place in physical space-time, and social space. (Kemmis, Heikkinen et al., 2014)
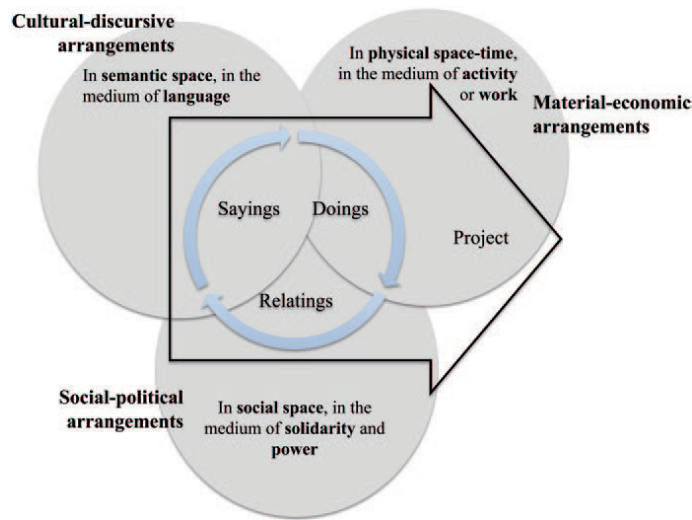
FIGURE 6   The media and spaces in which sayings, doings and relatings exist
                  (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014, p. 34).

My aim was to find out what are the factors that enable or constrain the use of student-centred teaching methods at the Village School. After analysing the data thematically, I continued by analysing sayings, doings and relatings (Figure 6). That meant, for example, examining what kind of language teachers use when they are talking about school or student-centred pedagogy, how the surrounding materials are arranged at the school or what are the relatings between the different stakeholders. Again, I continued the analysis by determining the cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements related to the practice (Appendix 4).
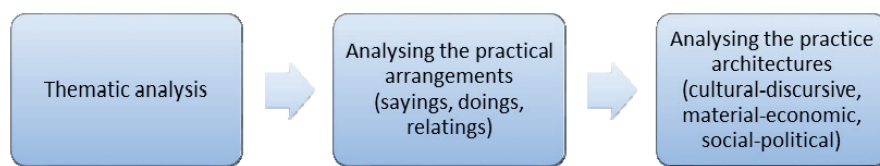
FIGURE 7   The steps of analysis

The videotaped lessons in cycle 2 were analysed also through the theory of practice architectures. The video data consisted of six short teaching sessions. They were analysed in three episodes. Each episode had a distinctive purpose, like the review of an earlier lesson, preparing students for the main task of the lesson or a group activity. Each episode was first transcribed and my comments were added. This was already an interpretation of what happened in the classroom. In the next stage I analysed the practices in the classroom, describing say-

ings (what the teacher or students said in and about the practice), doings (what teacher and students did and what kind of material surrounding made the practice possible) and relatings (how the teacher and students related to each other). Thirdly, I described the cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements. In the conclusive analysis, I have drawn out how these practices support or do not support (enable or constrain) using SCL and TCL methods at the school.

3.6   Ethical issues considered in the study

Ethics is concerned with ensuring that the interests and well-being of people are not harmed as a result of the research being done (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). Respecting persons, avoiding harm, enacting justice and exhibiting beneficence are the central principles of research ethics. Informed consent has to be given freely and voluntarily, without fear of any kind of penalties if people do not participate in an action research initiative. (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014.)

In this research, ethical consideration was a constant process during the whole research, and I was careful not to cause harm for teachers in any way. Participants of the research were informed about the aims and purposes of the research at the first meeting. I also ensured that the students or teachers were not harmed because of our actions at the school or because of the information that would be published. The group discussions, workshop and some other activities were part of the school's CDP-project and were obligatory, but all of the individual interviews were voluntary. Permission of the teachers was asked by consent form (Appendix 2).

The governmental officers were aware of our project and an educational school instructor participated in most of the activities conducted at the school. Before starting the research, I went to the district (woreda) education office to clarify the goals of the research. My research plan was accepted at the office and verbal permission was given by the educational inspector. Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants was secured by changing the school's name and using the name of the area instead of the village. Photos used in the research are not from the Village School, but from various schools around Ethiopia. They are added to the report to illustrate the context of the research. Teachers were willing to perform using their own names, but because the data includes sensitive issues relating, for instance, to politics, teachers and the school have been given pseudonyms. I often discussed the findings and interpretations with Ethiopian colleagues, and in that way made sure that I had understood correctly and made right conclusions.

4 CYCLE 1: GETTING TO KNOW THE STUDENT-CENTRED METHOD

The first cycle of action research took place between October, 2011 and January, 2012. The cycle included the following steps:

1. Planning: Teachers discussed the challenges at the Village School. After the discussion they chose one of the challenges to be improved by action research. Their choice was to develop teaching methods based on student-centred pedagogy.
2. Acting: All teachers (23) participated in the workshop about student-centred teaching methods. This workshop was part of the school's CPD programme.

3. Observing: Teachers discussed the workshop and their experiences in it.

4. Reflecting: Teachers made a plan for the second AR cycle.

4.1 First visit to the Village School

Our action research process began in October, 2011. Before that, I had met one of the older school teachers, and he had told me about their school, their challenges and their willingness to improve the situation at the school. He invited me for a visit. I visited the Village School for the first time in October, 2011. My diary notes from that day describe excitement and enthusiasm:

> I drove my car next to the school area. It was surrounded by a fence and a guard dressed in an army uniform allowed me to get in. Grass was growing high, hundreds of children stared at me without saying anything… Then I asked them, in their own language, to show me the school director's office. They were very surprised and shouted to each other: "She speaks Amharic!" I felt very, very nervous when I entered the school directors' office and told that I would be interested to do research with them. I hadn't been able to inform them about my visit beforehand because there is no mobile network in the village. I think they were very surprised too, when a "ferenj" (foreigner) suddenly appeared to their distant school. (My diary, 10.10.2011)

The school director was polite and formal and told me that I would be very welcome, but I needed permission from the local education office. This describes the hierarchical system of Ethiopian culture and the top-down decision-making. The education office is situated in the next city, and I drove there straight from the school. My diary notes reveal that I did not enter the school as a confident expert. I also felt that local teachers were the experts in their own context and culture, and I needed to learn from them.

> The office was made of clay. There were a lot of people in the yard and in the office building. I was asked to come to meet the officer straight away, I guess there are not many foreigners visiting that office often. I spent half an hour by telling the officer (and all the 20-30 people in the office) about my idea to do an action research at the local school. I was speaking Amharic and the officer added many questions. I felt like being interrogated and I knew that I had to pass this test to do my research… At the end he asked if I wanted to do research in other schools too. He promised to send a message to the school and tell that I was allowed to have any information I needed. I was very relieved because without this information I wouldn't have been able to do the research! (My diary, 10.10.2011)

4.2 Observing the lessons

During the first visit at the school I spent two days observing the lessons. My goal was to better understand the rural school context and the teachers' every day work and to become more familiar with the teachers. I followed eight lessons in class levels 1 (science), 2 (English, math), 3 (Math), 4 (Amharic, science)

and 5 (ethics). Science and math were held in the local language, which was the students' first language, but the teacher also used some Amharic during the lessons. English and Amharic lessons were held in those languages, but instructions concerning exercises were given in the local language to make sure that all students had understood what to do.

First lessons start at 8:30 am daily, but during my observation several students came late. Teachers told that long walking distances and the local culture are the reasons for coming late. Some of the children are frequently absent because some parents do not consider schooling important, or because they are not able to provide packed lunches for children to take to school. The school does not offer lunches. Most of the children came by bare feet or wearing slippers. Students did not wear uniforms as is usual in Ethiopia. Teachers explained that if they were forced to purchase uniforms, many children would not be able to attend the school. The majority of families in the area are farmers, and because the families are big, purchasing uniforms for several children is financially difficult for them.

The lessons in the lower primary school (grades 1 - 4) were held in the older buildings made of clay. In each class there were about 40 to 60 children. Not all of the children had a textbook of their own, and usually four or five children used the same book. Each child carried several notebooks, one for each subject.

Lessons mostly followed the same pattern. Teacher taught the content of the lesson, made notes on the chalkboard and the children copied the text into their notebooks. In the English lesson the teacher played with the children a game where she asked the students to touch their nose, toes, stomach, etc. The teachers' capabilities to speak English was very modest and it was quite difficult to understand their pronunciation. Teachers used a lot of repetition. In the English lesson students repeated the body parts in unison approximately 10 times. English is the third language, after the local language and Amharic, for the children at the school.

Children listened to the teachers carefully in every class level and were eager to answer when teachers asked questions. They asked their turn to answer by raising their hands. Teachers used encouraging sentences like "Good, my students," "Well done," or "Try again." In some classes, the teacher and other students clapped their hands if someone gave the right answer. The teachers used friendly voices and made an effort to handle the content of the lesson in understandable ways. For example, the first grade teacher drew pictures of parasites on the chalkboard during the science lesson. She also asked children if they had had experiences of amoeba or giardiasis in their own families. In another lesson, the teacher taught about HIV/Aids and drew a picture of a condom on the chalkboard. I felt this surprising because often sex-related issues are considered taboo in Ethiopia. Teachers told me later that because HIV/Aids was part of the curricula it had to be taught even if it was very difficult for teachers. Teachers explained that the students were divided in three different rows according to their capabilities. One teacher told me that because

they did not have a sufficient number of textbooks, she gave books to the most skilful students. Another teacher told me that the students were allowed to take the textbook home "turn by turn".

4.3   Discussion about the challenges

I planned to make individual interviews with teachers during my visit at the Village School, but teachers told that they would prefer discussions in groups. I was not familiar with them yet and some of them were afraid to speak English. Group discussion is often used as a data collecting method in action research. Group interviews save time and they may be helpful, especially where the interviewer encourages participants to express different views than ones already brought up in discussion, and when the researcher and participants are not familiar with each other (Eskola & Suoranta, 2008; Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014). In this research, the school director participated in two group discussions, and my concern was that the teachers would be afraid to speak their opinions freely. I understood that I was new to them and that the school director's duty was to supervise my intentions at the school. Teachers were divided into three groups, 8, 7 and 8. The aim for the meeting was to make a collective plan for our AR, which would describe the participants' shared concerns about their current situation (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014).

I asked the groups to discuss freely their everyday work and the challenges they were facing. Each discussion lasted about half an hour, and they were recorded. I made some supplementary questions which were not planned beforehand, but did not attend the discussion in other way. Discussions were vivid with no pauses. All teachers participated in the discussion with at least a few sentences. I told teachers beforehand that they were allowed to use English or Amharic, and both languages were used.

"Teachers' work in rural areas is exhausting."

Teachers described their work exhausting, for example, because of the long distances from home, and the lack of breaks, ventilation, water and light in the classrooms. Many of them walk to school long distances or travel by bus. Buses do not leave punctually and often travellers need to wait a long time for the bus. At the school there is no place to change clothes, to have a shower or to rest before classes. There is no access to water in the school. Teachers have a small recreation room but they are often too busy to drink coffee or meet each other there. The condition of the classrooms are considered insufficient. Teachers said that especially in the dry season classrooms were very hot and dusty. Buildings at the Village School are mainly made of clay and have no electricity.

> I walk six kilometres to work. It is very dusty and hot. I don't have a change to refresh myself before starting the job. We teach from morning to afternoon without rest. We don't have even a tea break. (Maheru, secondary school, male)

> Especially in the dry seasons classrooms are very dusty and dirty.

> In the afternoons classrooms are very hot. We don't have enough water to wash our hands. Girls would need a shower, otherwise they cannot come to school during the period time. (Endale, secondary school, male)

These quotations show that the working conditions at the school are rather poor which causes exhaustion among the teachers. The situation is similar to other schools in Ethiopia or in other sub-Saharan African countries (Moon & Wolfenden, 2012), where schools, especially in rural areas, are functioning with very modest facilities. Most of the schools in Ethiopia do not have necessary facilities, such as water and latrines (Lasonen et al., 2005).

"We don't have books, pencils or paper."

The majority of challenges at the Village School are related to materials. For example, the lack of teaching and learning materials and technology makes it difficult to conduct teaching in ways other than by lecturing, copying and rote learning. Even when there are materials like textbooks, the teachers felt that their content was far from the rural context. The teachers explained that because children in rural areas often do not go to preschool, schoolbooks in the first grade are too demanding for them. There are a lack of chairs, tables, pencils and chalks as well.

> We don't have enough text books. Four or five students are sharing a book and taking it home turn by turn. (Etetu, primary school, female).

> Books are planned for urban schools. All the pictures and texts are about cities, not rural. (Fantanesh, primary school, female)

> The books are prepared for the urban students. The book content is far from their capacity. This is causing problems on the teaching process. When those students come to school the books that are prepared by the government are too much for them, because they did not learn how to spell. (Alem, primary school, female)

> There is no modern technology, even we don't have enough chairs. Those things are harming the teaching process. We have shortage of teaching aid and reference books. We have only outdated books here. The number of text books and students is very different. We don't have books for all of them. Teachers are struggling and doing their best to use the limited source.

> Children sit very close to each other's because we have shortage of chairs and tables. This causes noise. (Endale, secondary school, male)

"I do my best, but with 70 students it is difficult."

Student-teacher ratio was considered too high, which affected teachers' capability to do their job properly. Teachers should follow up each students' progress carefully, but because of the high student-teacher ratios it was almost impossible, according to the teachers. Many students start school late, and there may be students whose age is several years above the age appropriate for the class level. Teachers described that students come from very diverse situations. They represent three different ethnic and language groups. Their cultures also differ according to their ethnic background. Most of the parents are farmers. These families are often very poor and the parents may be illiterate. For these parents it is hard to support children with their homework and some parents do not send their children regularly to school.

> In one class there may be 80 students. It is very difficult to follow each of them closely. (Fekede, secondary school, male)

> As you know in urban areas there are 30 to 40 students in one class. But here it is doubled. Just for the sake of survival we have to accept the policy, even if following the students is impossible. Teachers´ responsibility to follow-up in all the subjects is the matter of the policy. But if there were 40 to 50 students per class it would be easier and possible. In this situation close follow-up is unthinkable.

> In the same classroom there may be students who are 8, 9 or 10 year olds. Some children start school too late. (Tigist, primary school, female)

> Students themselves come from far areas and different locations. Teachers can't see them or treat them equally. (Tigist, primary school, female)

> Students come late to the school in the mornings. Some of them do not do their homework because they have to work at home. Parents can't help them because they are illiterate. For teacher balancing between all the students, 70 and above, is very difficult. Close follow-up is impossible, there are too many of them. (Getahun, primary school, male)

"I am trying my best to satisfy the government."

Respondents felt that the government placed demands on teachers that they had to fulfil, but often it was considered very difficult. They felt that teachers in rural areas were not heard by the government. Teachers told that the government expected them to teach according to student-centred methods instead of lecturing and rote learning. The teachers are expected to fill annual, weekly and daily lesson plans, and in the situation where teachers do not have any time for extra activities, it was considered time consuming and stressful. In this situation, teachers felt that they were not able to plan new kinds of lessons based on SCL methods.

> Teachers of rural areas haven't got attention. If they had got attention they would have said a lot. (Belay, primary school, male)

> I am trying my best to satisfy the government. But I don't have a mental freedom. Teachers try to satisfy the interest of the government policy and their own career. (Belay, primary school, male)

> The problem is the policy. It is difficult to apply the policy. (Mulatu, secondary school, male)

Despite the various challenges, the overall situation at the Village School was still seen as better than at other schools in the area.

> In our school we have well trained teachers. But some schools don't.

> Personally our students are good. Unless they have their own problem or family problem they are all doing well. They are cooperative. (Tigist, primary school, female)

"Teachers are not respected among the villagers."

Teachers felt that they were not appreciated among the villagers because of low salary. They described that it was not enough even to cover their basic needs, like tef (local grain) or house rent. Low salary had affected their status negatively among the students and the villagers. Male teachers told that they had not been able to build their own houses because of low salary, which has complicated their chances of getting married. The same problem has been described in other research as well (Gemeda & Tynjälä, 2015a; Sarton et al., 2009).

> The salary is not enough to cover the monthly house expenses, not even to buy one quintal of tef (local grain). This has affected my capability to get married. (Fekede, secondary school, male)

> Teachers don't have capacity to build their own houses, not even in the rural areas or small villages. Because of that they are facing problems in marriage. They cannot marry whom they choose. In our area someone has to have his own house to marry someone. Otherwise he is not going to be chosen by female. (Fekede, secondary school, male)

> The rural teachers earn a salary of one or two thousand birr a month. That money is not enough to cover the monthly house expenses, not even to buy one quintal of tef. That economical problem has stressed the teachers. (Abraham, secondary school, male)

> This time uneducated people leave to South Africa and other countries. When they come back their living standard is very different than teachers'. The gap between teachers and those people has caused loss of confidence among the teachers. People undermine them. Even the students do not respect them. Students in the class need to be superior, because they have better dresses, mobile… (Mulatu, secondary school, male)

4.4 Choosing the action research topic

Teachers described that they had missed a chance to discuss together about their work and talking together about challenges, an opportunity which em-

powered them. The teachers' positive attitude encouraged me as a researcher and created a good atmosphere for the discussion. Teachers described that they were willing to develop professionally, but due to lack of time and budget it had been difficult.

> Our teachers don't have enough time for discussion. We just run from one lesson to another with no break. (Martha, secondary school, female)

> We need training. We would happy to develop our skills. But we don't have any budget. (Abraham, secondary school, male)

After the discussion, the teachers were asked to choose the challenge that would be improved by action research. The Ministry of Education encourages teachers to accomplish their own action research programmes at schools. We followed the instructions of *The Toolkit for Continuous Professional Development* (MoE, 2009), which gives guidelines for teachers on how to implement the CPD programmes. The first step is to identify the CPD needs of the school and, second, to develop a plan to gain the desired outcomes. I told the teachers that the challenge should be a relatively limited and small-scale issue in the sense that we could improve it by our actions. I also told them that we did not have any financial budget for the project. The teachers brought up the need for professional development and training. They said that they needed training especially in subjects like mathematics and English, or in teaching methodologies. The government had asked teachers in the whole country to start using student-centred teaching methods as a part of their lessons, which was considered challenging.

> Every teacher has enough knowledge and skill in their own subject matter. But many teachers have difficulties in their English language. (Fekede, secondary school, male)

> The other important thing is the teaching methodology. Even if we have plenty of knowledge but we don't know the teaching methodology it is meaningless. (Belay, primary school, male)

> This time, if it is possible, student-centred teaching method is very important. If we can get training on that methodology we can raise up good students. – The training would be helpful. (Belay, primary school, male)

> Our method is writing on the chalkboard and students hear that and forget it after a while. Therefore it will be helpful if we can get the training. (Getahun, primary school, male)

The idea of student-centred teaching was familiar for teachers, but they missed the knowledge on how to put these methods in practice. Teachers decided that our AR project's goal would be discovering and learning new teaching methods based on SCL pedagogy. These methods should be suitable for the prevailing culture and the rural school context with limited materials.

4.5   Student-centred learning and active learning

Definitions of "active learning" emphasize students' participating and collaboration (Table X). Learning by "doing" is a theme that many educators have stressed since John Dewey's argument that children must be engaged in an active quest for learning new ideas.

Although there is a 'considerable disagreement and confusion about what student centred learning actually is' (Farrington, 1991, p. 16), many research emphasize for example activeness of the students and equal relationship between the teacher and the students. According to research (e.g. Cannon & Newble, 2003; Lea, Stephenson & Troy, 2000), student-centred learning includes

- the reliance on active rather than passive learning;
- an emphasis on deep learning and understanding;
- increased responsibility and accountability on the part of the student;
- an increased sense of autonomy in the learner;
- an interdependence between teacher and learner;
- mutual respect within the learner teacher relationship, and
- a reflexive approach to the teaching and learning process on the part of both teacher and learner.

For example cooperative learning and problem-based learning are approaches that promote active learning. Emphasise is on the activity of students, and this pedagogy is often seen as opposite to teacher-centred learning.

As I have described in the previous chapter, the teachers of the Village School made a plan to develop new teaching methods based on student-centred learning instead of lecturing and rote learning. Although the term "student-centred" is not defined clearly in MoE publications, words like "child-friendly teaching," "learner-centred," "active learning" and "problem solving" are frequently mentioned (FDR Ethiopia, 2005). More detailed advice is given in the subject curricula. For example, teachers of grade 1 and 2 students are encouraged to use a variety of teaching methods in their math lessons, including discussion, pupil activity and enquiry, along with games, puzzles, rhymes, songs and competitions (MoE, 2008).

The policy statement of the MoE (2008, 2010) emphasize a learner-centred approach, active learning, and problem-solving approaches at every class level. Teachers and schools are not only encouraged but demanded to plan and accomplish their Continuous Professional Development programme, which is supposed to concentrate on practicing student-centred and student activating methods. ESDP IV (MoE 2010a) emphasizes translating schools into genuine learning environments, which concentrate on increased student participation. Publications and workshops about active learning and student-centred pedagogy are offered to schools.

Although the employment of innovative teaching and learning is emphasized in the policy and teachers are encouraged to use student-centred teaching methods, traditional lecture methods, in which teachers talk and students listen, still dominate most classrooms (Serbessa, 2006). Frost & Little (2014) observed 776 math classes in Ethiopian primary schools, and their study showed that 74.5% used teacher-oriented teaching, 10.7% had student-centred learning and 14.6% involved off-task activity. Group tasks were observed only 2.7% of the time. Their study showed that students are more likely to be engaged in student-centred activities if they are taught by a female teacher with a Diploma. Observation also showed that in the Village School, teaching is mainly based on lecturing. In the lower grades the teachers used songs and small games, but in the upper grades teaching was based only on lecturing and copying.

According to previous research (Frost & Little, 2014; Sarton et al., 2009; Serbessa, 2006), there are several obstacles to using student-centred methods in Ethiopia, such as the tradition of teaching and child upbringing, the lack of institutional and learning resources, the teachers' lack of expertise, inappropriate curricular materials for active learning and students' lack of prior experience to actively participate in the teaching and learning process. According to Serbessa (2006): "Even though a learner-centred approach may not be the cure for all the education quality problems in Ethiopia, it is a step in the right direction, although it is a widely phrased, but poorly understood concept in practice." The participants of this research were well aware of the main concepts of student-centred teaching, but they had not been able to use this pedagogy in practice. Publications of the MoE (2008, 2010) give instructions that teachers should accomplish the idea of student-centred pedagogy, and the aim of this research was to bring the theories to practical level in everyday classroom work by teachers.

Research (Dagnew & Asrat, 2016) regarding concerned teachers' perceptions toward quality of education in Northern Ethiopia showed that 30.1% of the respondents agreed that quality teaching is the extent to which teachers give good lectures and 63.1% of the teachers thought that quality learning is the extent to which students score high marks on the final examination. A majority (63.1%) responded that quality learning is the extent to which students recite what has been said in the class. The study also showed that some teachers tried to use active learning, but others still dominated the lecture teaching learning activities. These rates show that the delivery of student-centred learning is not yet to the desired levels in Ethiopia. (Dagnew & Asrat, 2016.)

4.6 Workshop: Introduction to student-centred methods

Collective AR plan
Our collective action research plan followed the guidelines of Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon (2014), as described earlier in Chapter 3.1.1. We started the plan by describing our shared concern about the teachers' current situation, which

was the concern about their capability to teach in a student-centred way. The MoE had instructed teachers to change their teaching methods from lecturing and rote learning into one that was more student-centred. Teachers felt that they knew the method of SCL well enough, but were not able to put it in practice.

Second, we described the changes we planned to make. Our goal was first to gain deeper knowledge about SCL and then start to use the method. We also made an initial schedule of activities in order to show who would be doing what, when, where and how. Teachers suggested a workshop concerning the SCL methods, and we made a plan for a one-day workshop. The last stage of the plan concerned my research, and I made a preliminary view about how I thought the evidence I would collect might allow me to reflect productively on what happened. I decided to discuss with teachers during and after the workshop and record all the discussions. I also made a plan to continue keeping a diary and recording field notes.

The workshop
The one-day workshop about student-centred teaching methods was held in January, 2012, at the school. The workshop was part of school's CPD-programme, and all teachers, the school director, the inspector from the educational office and one parent participated in it. Teachers asked me to tell them about the different teaching methods that they could use instead of lecturing. Instead of presenting student-centred methods as they are seen in my own context as a Finnish primary school teacher, I chose to arrange context-based action research training based on a publication of the MoE (2008). My role in this cycle was to be a trainer. Teachers told me their wishes for the content, but the workshop was planned by me.

The workshop consisted of

      1) Theory part of student-centred teaching methods
      2) Practical activities
      3) Discussion

In the theory part, I reviewed the differences between teacher-centred learning (TCL) and student-centred learning (SCL), and the participants discussed them. These theories were familiar to all teachers, because they were taught them in TTCs and trainings provided by the government. In the second part, we practiced activities listed in the MoE publication, like brainstorming, buzz (quick discussions), energizers (small games) and action planning (planning imaginary and practical actions for the school). The workshop also included other practices about how to activate children, such as using mind maps, games or teaching based on dialogue. The atmosphere was very positive and cheerful. Teachers were very active and enthusiastic. The day built not only their knowledge about the method but also our relationship into a more informal state. In the third part,

we discussed the participants' experiences. This was a reflection part of the first cycle. The student-centred teaching method was seen as very positive and time-saving for the teachers.

> It was such a funny day full of laughter! All teachers participated the drama and played the games. I think I have never had this participatory group of students… Today we became more familiar and more informal than before. I was able to step down from the platform on which I was put. (My diary 16.1.2012)

> If all the teachers teach this way, the students must be perfect. I appreciate this method and continue this way. (Fekede, secondary school, male)

> It is important method for students. Before we did not use this method. In the future time we can use this method. (Meheretu, secondary school, male)

> This method makes teacher the facilitator, instead of pouring the knowledge to student. Teacher can use short time. It also saves teachers energy. Teachers told that they felt comfortable for using the method: Okay, it is important and easy method and interesting. It is easy for me. No problem. This method is very important for the students. But before today I did not use it. From today on I will use this method. (Tigist, primary school, female)

One parent of a grade 8 student participated during part of the workshop, and he emphasized the importance of following the governmental policy. In the parent's speech it was seen that I was considered as an outsider and as someone who brings the "right" knowledge or way to teach to the school:

> I am the representative of the students' parents and I am very pleased that a foreigner came to our school and gave the school teachers training based on the government's curriculum and policy. - You have been working in accordance with the government's curriculum and policies. (Parent of the secondary school student)

> I am pleased that you came with your training plans and goals for the two days training. - Do not stop with this for the future. Share us your knowledge. I wish you will change this school for the better. - Help us as much as you can. I will not ask you to prepare a budget or do this or do that. Help our school based on your vision. It is my good wish that you will be on our side. (Parent of the secondary school student)

4.7   Summary of the first cycle: "I accept the method"

The main goal of the first cycle was to choose the challenge to be developed by action research and start the action to improve the situation. The topics described by the teachers in group discussions are very similar with those of other studies conducted in Ethiopia. Teachers interviewed for the VSO report (Sarton et al., 2009) described being challenged by the lack of teaching and learning materials, high student-teacher ratios, limited display materials and frequent revisions to the curriculum.

Participants of the study listed the following reasons for teachers' low motivation: inadequate salaries and maternity benefits; limited access to adequate accommodations; varied applications of sick-leave policy; teacher absenteeism;

absence of uniform incentives; limited access to training and workshops; poor societal view and treatment of teachers; lack of respect from students; negative view of teaching from family, friends, community and government.

Gemeda & Tynjälä (2015a) interviewed 32 Ethiopian secondary school teachers and found that low salary and the absence of a link between performance and reward were the major motivational obstacles for teachers. They explained that low salary for teachers changed their attitude towards the teaching profession and made them lose interest. Low salary caused basic needs to be unmet for teachers, declining prestige and hatred for the teaching profession. The participants emphasized that in addition to placing the basic needs out of reach, the low salary of teachers contributed to the loss of respect for teachers and the teaching profession. According to teachers, the teaching profession in Ethiopia is the least preferred profession in the country. Scales of teachers' salaries are spaced between seven rungs of the career structure. A successful teacher may need seventeen years to progress to the top of the ladder and acquire a new title as Senior Lead Teacher. These experienced teachers will get a little more than double the salary of beginner teachers (MoE & UNESCO, 2013).

After the discussion the teachers chose one challenge to be improved by action research. They chose to work on developing the student-centred pedagogy in their own school. Our main goal for the whole action research then became bringing student-centred teaching methods to a practical level at the Village School. My sub-goals as the researcher were becoming more familiar with the Village School teachers, getting deeper knowledge about Ethiopian school culture and learning the way teachers see the school and education.

The workshop about student-centred teaching methods was implemented in January, 2012, at the Village School for all teachers. School teachers decided that the workshop would part of the school's CPD programme and compulsory for all teachers. The participants were engaged actively in all the activities and described that after the workshop they knew the SCL method better and were willing to use it in their lessons. They also felt that SCL methods would help their students to learn more effectively. Yet it is important to note that Ethiopian culture is very polite, and giving negative feedback for me as a foreigner and doctoral student would have been considered very impolite.

This cycle was mainly very led by the researcher, and did not became as participatory as I wished. At this stage the role of the researcher was seen as that of an expert and the leader of the project, as well a provider of the training.

> We need training. So you can give us something you believe is good for us. (Taddese, secondary school, male)

> The training is very important. You may arrange us training, you can come and motivate and advise them (teachers). We will be happy to learn. (Fekede, secondary school, male)

> We have agreed now the time for the training. She is willing to give us training on those days. You just need to agree. (School director)

For me, this cycle was reflecting and learning. I learned to know the school context better, I became more familiar with the teachers participating in it and also learned to know the student-centred methods more deeply. I had used some participatory-learning methods in my own work as a primary school teacher in Finland and as an educator in Ethiopia. This cycle also offered me a chance to think consider my own teaching and professionality.

> I realised, that this research is a change also for me to develop professionally. Even if I know student-centred methods well and I have used these methods in my own teaching for years, have I really ever reflected on my own way to teach very consciously? Also reflecting on my own position here at Village School is a constant process. I'm younger than the majority of the teachers and they know the context, I don't. I feel very "small" and humble, I try to avoid the impression that I am here because I know something better than they do or I am here to bring something they don't have yet. Still I often feel that they consider me as an expert which I don't feel to be… This is our shared project, we are all here to develop together as teachers. (My diary, 3.2.2012)

The eachers decided to continue the research with the second cycle. After the first cycle, they felt that they were ready to try to use SCL methods in practice and the goal of the second cycle was planned to help them in this process.

5   CYCLE 2: PRACTISING TO USE THE STUDENT-CENTRED METHOD

The second cycle of the action research was conducted in April, 2012. All 23 teachers participated in the cycle, and it was part of the school's CPD-programme. It included the following steps:

1. Planning: The teachers wanted to try to use student-centred methods in their lessons. They decided to plan lessons together, including SCL activities, videotape the lessons and talk about them.
2. Acting: The teachers planned lessons in smaller groups. Six sample lessons were videotaped.
3. Observing: Six videotapes were watched together with all 23 teachers.

4. Reflecting: The teachers gave feedback of the videotaped lessons. They discussed the second cycle and started to plan the third cycle.

5.1 "We know the idea, but how do we use it?"

After the first cycle teachers felt that they knew the theory of student-centred learning method quite well, and right after the workshop they decided to try to use the activities based on SCL in their lessons. When I came to the school three months later, in April, 2012, the teachers told me that it had been hard to put student-centred teaching into practice. Some teachers had been able to use some of the new tools, but most of them felt that they needed more support to be able to use the new methods.

> It has been very difficult to use the method. I tried, but I need more training before I can use it (Taddese, secondary school, male).

> I have used mind map and new kind of problem solving tasks for my students. They are very motivated of them. I try to use exercises related to their own life, like buying fruits from the market or counting the increase of gas price in our town. (Amanuel, secondary school, male)

> We are better teachers when you are here. We try more. But when you are elsewhere, I use old methods only. (Dawit, primary school, male)

Teachers made a plan for the second cycle. They decided to prepare short teaching sessions together, videotape some of them, watch them together and give feedback of the videotaped lessons. Each session was supposed to have some elements of student-centred teaching listed in the MoE instructions. All 23 participants planned teaching sessions in groups of 2 - 4 teachers, and six sessions were videotaped.

5.2 Action: videotaping the lessons

Six teaching sessions were videotaped, watched together with all the teachers, and feedback was given for the teachers who taught on the video. The length of each session was about 10 minutes. The quality of one video was insufficient and I was not able to transcribe it later. Five other sessions and feedback of them were given by other teachers and are presented here. Examples of more detailed transcriptions and analyse are provided in Appendix 4.

Birhanu
The subject of Birhanu's (male) 5th grade social science lesson was responsibilities. The group consisted of 55 students. Most of the lesson was held in English, but Birhanu used also Amharic to give instructions for the students. The lesson

was shared into two parts. In the first part students told what kind of responsibilities they had at home and in their environment. Students gave answers like cutting grass, fetching the water or feeding cows. The teacher collected the answers into a mind map on the chalkboard. In the second part, students discussed in groups the homework they did at home after schooldays. This conversation was in Amharic. At the end of the lesson they read the book chapter about the issue and did exercises from the book. The length of the teaching session was 12 minutes.

The videotape was watched together later with all teachers. The colleagues gave Birhanu very positive feedback. They especially highlighted that Birhanu walked around the class and checked that each group knew what to do and they did what the teacher had asked them to do. This was considered a new model of teaching and very essential in the student-centred learning method.

> Teacher Birhanu is a beginner teacher, but I am very pleased with his teaching approach. He was like an experienced one. (Getahun, primary school, male)

Tadelech
Female English teacher Tadelech planned a teaching session of eight minutes. The group consisted of 52 grade 5 students. The session was divided into a teaching part led by Tadelech (2 min.), book exercises (3 min.) and a group working session (3 min.). The topic was the future tense. In the first part she taught the basic idea of future tense on the chalkboard. She wrote sentences like "I will go to market" or "I will wash my clothes". Then she read the beginning of the sentence like "I will…" and students said the rest of the sentence in unison: "…go to market".

In the second part Tadelech gave instructions for the group work. She asked students to form groups of five, to take their exercise books and practice the future tense sentences from the book together. In the third part students created sentences of their own in groups, and Tadelech walked around the classroom helping them. She gave instructions to the groups both in English and Amharic and asked if they had understood the task.

In their feedback teachers noticed that Tadelech used her voice well and her instructions were simple and easy to hear. She also used clear and simple language (English) and visited each group by advising them if needed.

Amanuel
Math teacher Amanuel's (male) math teaching session lasted 8:40 min. The class consisted of 58 grade 7 students. He had planned practical exercises related to the students' daily life. He wrote prices of fruits on the chalkboard and made exercises about them. First he explained the task in English, but because students did not understand what to do, he explained it again in Amharic. Students were asked to solve the task in groups. Amanuel walked around the classroom and made sure that all groups had understood the task. Students were active and suggested solutions to the task. One of the female students made a calculation on the chalkboard. Amanuel added more tasks related to

prices of the fruits. All students followed the teacher carefully and silently, and concentrated intensively on the issue.

In their feedback, the other teachers considered Amanuel's teaching session very student centred. He used the knowledge the students had beforehand and used facts they needed every day, like prices of fruits at the market. They also liked the idea that Amanuel asked each group and several students about their opinions, and made sure that the all students had understood the content of the lesson.

Abraham

The topic of Abraham's (male) 7th grade English lesson was conditionals. There were 61 students in the classroom. Abraham started the lesson by asking students to discuss in groups what they already knew about conditionals. The students did not know what to do and the teacher encouraged them by saying: "Talk with your friends. It is possible. Discuss together." This kind of working seemed to be unfamiliar for the students and they needed a lot of support. Teacher walked among the students and advised them to discuss. "Don't be silent. You can talk together. Okay, what do you know about conditionals?"

After the discussion, students explained to the teacher the difference between different conditionals and Abraham made a figure on the chalkboard. Abraham encouraged girls to participate by asking: "What about girls?" He did not ask only the students who raised their hands but also tried to activate the passive ones. Abraham walked around the class, smiled to students and asked extra sentences. He had an intensive contact with students (looking, smiling, talking, touching). He tried to use only English and his English skills were clearly better than other teachers'. When he walked and advised students he gave some extra advice in Amharic.

After discussion he asked students to create conditional sentences in groups. He gave some example sentences when he realised that students did not know what to do: "If you had ten birr, what would you do?" Abraham was the only teacher who used students' names. Teachers paid attention especially to Abraham's kind attitude towards his students.

> Abraham looked into their eyes and used their names. Even his face was friendly. I think students saw it and they were happy to participate and answer to his questions because of that. (Fekede, secondary school, male)

Endale

Endale's math lesson was about dividing. There were 54 grade 8 students in the classroom. Endale made the lesson very practical. He used tasks closely related to children's' life, like "If mother has 84 birr and she has three children, how many birr does each child get?" Students solved the problems in groups of 5 - 6. Afterwards, Endale wrote the patterns on the chalkboard. He encouraged groups to work together by saying "Discuss with your group," and gave feedback like "Excellent," or "Good." Students were active, all groups worked hard to solve the problems and raised hands in order to answer.

Other teachers paid attention in their feedback, especially to girls' activeness.

> All students participated and even the girls were very active. I think they were active because Endale used lot of examples from children's' lives. All the children go to the market and buy fruits. It's good for them to practice math which is related to their lives, they won't be cheated easily if they can count well. Also they are happy to think calculations which are from their own lives. And when they are motivated, they learn too. (Abraham, secondary school, male)

5.3 Good teacherhood and professionalism in the Ethiopian context

In the feedback session teachers raised up the question of "good teacherhood." We discussed in groups about how the "good teacher" is seen in Ethiopia and what qualities a good teacher has. Most of the teachers shared the idea that a good teacher behaves well and is able to transfer knowledge to students. A teachers' main duty is to guarantee that the students have gained basic knowledge. Also the capability to prepare good lessons and to prepare his/her students for the annual tests was considered important.

> Unless there is no basic knowledge we cannot do anything. If somebody has the basic knowledge, he may develop his other skills like verbal skills or problem solving skills. For that reason the basic knowledge is most important in our region. (Tigist, primary school, female)

> He has to fill three basic things. That means skill, knowledge and attitude. Just three things is to measure if teacher is a good teacher. Then next to that is that teacher must prepare the lesson plan, annual plan and weekly plan. Then we say this kind of teacher is a good teacher in Ethiopia. - For example, how well he has knowledge. If he does not have skills he cannot pass the message for the students purposely. - Transit the data. That is a good teacher."(Mulatu, secondary school, male)

> Teacher must prepare the lesson plan, annual plan and weekly plan. Then we say this kind of teacher is a good teacher in Ethiopia."

> He has to be well disciplined. He has to be a good model for students. (Mulatu, secondary school, male)

In the light of the data we can see that during the first cycle, teachers emphasized strong and wide basic knowledge as the main purpose of the education system. Hargreaves (2000) viewed teacher professionalism based on the teacher response to the demands of the profession over different time periods, and he describes the four ages of teacher professionalism as

1) The age of pre-professionalism (teaching as a technical simple craft of lecturing and recitation type of teaching, with teachers who master the subject matter well);

2) The age of autonomous professional (teaching being a matter of judgment and choice, and to decide what is best for their students);
3) The age of collegial professional (teachers and teaching involved in consultation, collaboration and collective efforts in the organization), and the
4) The age of post-professionalism (teachers and teaching engaged with the parents and wider community/responding to external demands). (Hargreaves, 2000; Saqipi, Asunta & Korpinen, 2014.)

Ethiopian schools have features of the pre-professional age, where teaching is mostly based on lecturing and mastering the subject knowledge in order to prepare students to manage well on annual tests is considered most important. Autonomy of teachers is not encouraged; rather orders are given from top-to-down. Teachers are guided and followed by educational offices and inspectors with not having a choice to decide what and how to teach. The Village School teachers described that they have to follow the government policy and detailed curriculum carefully.

The study of Gemeda & Tynjälä (2015b) showed that in the process of professional development, Ethiopian teachers were considered as a learner, a passive receiver of information from experts, and everything was designed and prescribed for them from the centre (MoE) in a top-down fashion. Christie, Harley and Penny (2004) determine the teacher as a technician or teacher as reflective practitioner. In many sub-Saharan African countries, teachers are seen as technicians, where CPD is directed at institutions and teachers are given explicit instructions about how to go about their practice. The students are in the role of passive receivers. The Ethiopian MoE is now supporting teachers to use more student-centred teaching methods and to step towards "teacher as reflective practitioner." According to the MoE more attention should be paid to the activity of the students and collaboration of the teachers. But still teachers are given the detailed curriculum that guides what they should teach. Education policy emphasizes using the student-centred methodology, but at the same time constrains it by annual tests, pre-planned lesson plans and strict follow-up.

> We have to cover the content. If I want to teach everything from the curriculum, I have to lecture, that's only way to do it, because there are 70 students in my class. (Fekede, secondary school, male)

> If I don't teach everything in the curriculum, students are not prepared for the annual test and I have failed as a teacher. (Taddese, secondary school, male)

5.4   Summary of the second cycle: From theory to practice

The aim of the second cycle was to encourage and empower teachers to use student-centred teaching methods in practice. We tried to find ways to use the method in a way that would fit into the local culture and situation at the school with only a few materials and the high student-teacher ratio. The instructions of

the MoE guided our actions. The teachers planned lessons in groups, videotaped them, watched the videotapes together and discussed them.

The teachers succeeded in including some activating and student-centred teaching methods into their lessons. They used, for instance, group working and mind maps, walked around the classroom and made sure that each group had understood what to do. They used tasks related to students' every-day life, like buying vegetables from the market. This kind of teaching method was new for the students. It can be observed in the videotape that they were confused and unaware what they should do when teachers asked them to work in groups or discuss topics together. However, the students were active, listened to the teacher and obeyed him or her. The teachers and the students expressed their joy during the lesson and were motivated to continue AR. The teachers felt that planning lessons together, watching the videos, giving and getting feedback benefitted and motivated them. They also enjoyed the co-working with colleagues which is often impossible due to lack of time during the school days.

This cycle's action accomplished new kinds of practices at the Village School:

1) The students were encouraged to discuss together during the lessons and work in groups more than before.
2) The teachers walked among the students in the classrooms and made sure that all the students had understood the subject.
3) The teachers asked students' previous knowledge about the subject at the beginning of the lesson. They collected mind maps of the students' ideas.
4) The teachers used tasks related to students' everyday life.
5) The teachers worked together by planning the lessons.

The cycle was a first practical step towards student-centred learning methods in the classrooms and it encouraged teachers to work together. The teachers described that they enjoyed the co-working and were motivated by it. However, using the SCL method was considered difficult.

> In some extent it is difficult because our classes are large. The number of our students is more than we can manage. That make such kind of process difficult. – Students haven't practiced this kind of learning methods before. Sometimes they may be afraid because it is new for them. (Fekede, secondary school, male)

> When you are teaching such kind of class with 70 students, it is difficult to make everyone participate actively. It's too difficult. (Abraham, secondary school, male)

In the feedback several teachers emphasised that someone was using the method "in the right way" or "according to the policy." The student-centred method was seen as a new policy of the government that had to be obeyed. Some of them spoke about the benefit for the students: "This helps our students to become better in their studies and becoming more active too."

The teachers considered the cycle very useful, but the continuity of the professional development was seen dependent of my visits at the school:

> I think that if you continue visiting us in the future we believe that we will develop more. Such kind of visitations, such kind of teachers' participating teaching methods should be continuous. (Belay, secondary school, male)

> For the future you should program to come and follow up. You should not stop your support and follow up. It helps us to develop as teachers. (Getahun, primary school, male)

The teachers wanted to continue practicing the student-centred teaching. They felt that they knew the theory of the method well enough, and even succeeded in using it to some extent. They said that they wished to see some teachers use these methods, to get an idea about how to implement them in their own classes. One of the teachers brought up the idea of inviting some Finnish teachers to the Village School for a visit. I promised to find out if that was possible.

The cycle had consequences for my own teaching. Although I had always tried to activate my students, I felt that the activities of the third cycle supported and encouraged me to use more SCL methods in my own teaching. I was also invited to visit and give lectures about action research and student-centred teaching methods at the Teacher Training Centre near the Village School.

> I really did not think that this process would have such a big influence on my own teaching methods too. I have always used student-centred teaching methods as a part of my lessons, but now it has become more conscious. When I plan my lessons, I emphasize activating my students more than ever before. I can see that the Music School students enjoy this kind of lesson a lot. (My diary 30.3.2012).

6   CYCLE 3: SEEING TEACHERHOOD IN A NEW LIGHT

The third cycle was conducted in January, 2013 – January, 2014. It consisted of: Planning: Inviting the Finnish teacher students for a visit to use SCL teaching methods in collaboration with the Village School teachers.

Acting: 1. Following each other's lessons, planning lessons and teaching together with the Finnish teacher students (January, 2013).

Acting 2. Giving extra English lessons for grade 9 and 10 students with the Finnish teacher students (January, 2014)
Observing: Observing other teachers' lessons.
Reflecting: Discussing the outcomes.

At the end of the second cycle, the Village School teachers suggested that some Finnish teachers could come to visit their school and teach there. I moved back to Finland in the summer of 2012 and asked teacher students from Tampere University to do their practicum at the Village School. Nine teacher students visited the Village School from January 10, through February 2, 2013, and again in January 2014. The visits lasted 6 weeks in total. The first visit concentrated on co-teaching between the Finnish teacher students and the Ethiopian teachers. The second visit included extra English lessons in the afternoons with the grade 9 and 10 students. Between these visits, the teachers of the Village School continued practising the student-centred teaching methods by themselves.

All 23 Village School teachers participated in the common activities of the third cycle, and six teachers co-taught with Finnish teacher students. The Finnish teacher students were Eveliina, Johanna, Jenna, Elina, Mikko, Lauri, Olli, Minna and Sinianna. The Ethiopian teachers participating the co-work with the Finnish were Abraham (English), Fekede (English), Amanuel (math), Maheru (sports), Taddese (social Science) and Martha (biology). An inspector from the governmental office and the school director participated in some actions.

6.1 First visit of Finnish students: Teaching together

The first visit in January, 2013, included the following parts:

1) Introduction to the project
Before their first visit to the Village School, I informed the Finnish teacher students about Ethiopian culture and cultural manners in rural areas, like clothing, greetings and expressing feelings. I asked them not to take a leading role in the teaching process, and emphasized the importance of partnership and co-teaching. Students should concentrate in using student-centred teaching methods as much as possible because it was the goal of the whole action research. They were asked not to use other kinds of teaching materials than those the Village School teachers would be able to, because our aim was to develop teaching methods that could be used later. Ethiopian teachers were asked to take a role of advisor during the practicum of the Finnish teacher students, because they were the experts of the culture and the school context, as well as the graduated teachers with several years' experience.

The first visit started by gathering with all the Finnish teacher students and the 23 Village School teachers. The school director welcomed the guests and introduced the staff. I told about the goals that the students were given from their university and the goals of our action research. The Finnish teacher

students and the Village School teachers were mixed in small groups and asked to get acquainted with each other.

2) Observation

The Finnish teacher students followed lessons at the Village School for two days to get familiar with teachers, students and the school context. This enabled them also to take into account the level of students' English skills and the teaching methods used at the school. They mainly followed lessons in grades 5 - 8 because teaching language in those classes is English. Students said that the content of different subjects was more challenging than in Finland at the same class level. They also noticed that teachers were using some student-centred methods already, like group discussions.

3) Teaching

After following the lessons of their Ethiopian colleagues, the Finnish teacher students started to teach in pairs or with Ethiopian teachers together. The aim was to plan lessons together as much as possible, but because of difficulties in English communication it was demanding, especially in the first week. The Village School teachers are experienced in teaching in English, but conversation is considered challenging. The second goal was to use child-centred teaching methods as a part of each lesson. Students were allowed to use only the material that the Village teachers could make and use later. They had to follow the curriculum and teach according to the content planned for the week. I will describe two of the lessons and notes from the other lessons.

English lesson by Fekede, Jenna and Elina

Finnish teacher students Jenna and Elina and Village school teacher Fekede implemented an English lesson for 8th graders. Jenna and Elina had planned the lesson and Fekede assisted them. Two other teachers and I observed the lesson at the back of the classroom. The subject of the lesson was the verbs "mustn't," "shouldn't," "don't have to" and "can." The lesson was planned according to the curriculum and the teacher's guidance book, but everything except a few minutes' theory at the chalkboard was taught through games and discussion. The Finnish teacher students had prepared games using only materials found at the school, such as copy paper.

The 8th grade students were very confused when the Finnish teacher students asked them to stand up and walk around the classroom during the first game. This kind of action was new for them and Fekede had to encourage them to move. After short time of confusion and practice they were able to attend to the game. In the next game the students were asked to sit down on the floor, which raised confusion again, and the Finnish teacher students needed to show by example.

After the lesson, Fekede was asked to give feedback of the lesson in the role of advisor. The next day, school inspector came to visit, and Jenna, Elina

and Fekede taught the same lesson again for the other group. The inspector and school director followed the lesson and gave feedback for the Finnish teacher students and Fekede. He said later that it was very meaningful for him to get positive feedback from the inspector and school director.

Sport lesson with Meheretu

At first Mikko, Olli and Lauri observed the sport lessons taught by Meheretu. They were told that lessons consisted of warm ups, stretching and games led by the teacher. Girls participated in two first parts, but during the games (football or volleyball) they sat on the side and only boys played. Mikko, Olli and Lauri decided to plan lessons that would encourage girls to participate more. Their plan was also to invent new games using, for example, trash found at the school. By this they wanted to encourage teachers to activate the students with limited materials. Meheretu was not part of the planning because of language problems, but he participated in the lesson as an assistant teacher. Another Village School teacher participated in the sport lesson and translated speech between Meheretu and the Finnish teacher students. The Finnish teacher students' lesson consisted of warming up with games like "robbing the tail". They had prepared "tails" for each student from old strips of fabric found at the school. They played football in different ways: hand in hand by pairs, with two balls or hands behind the back. Girls participated in all the activities, which was a surprise also for Meheretu.

Finnish students' observations from the other lessons

In their final report, the Finnish teacher students described their observations. They reported that teaching methods like games were new for the Village School students, and that they were confused when the Finnish teacher students used them. When the pupils understood what to do, they were very motivated, active and eager to continue, and in the next lesson it was easier to use the same activities. The Finnish teacher students realised that some of the activities they used were not customary in the context. For example, when they asked pupils to sit on the floor, they did not obey before their teacher sat, or the girls and the boys were not used to playing games holding hands.

In the biology lesson, the Finnish teacher students noticed that the Village School students were able to repeat long, detailed and correct answers to questions like "tell me what is cellular respiration" because they had rote learned it from the textbook. When they were asked to discuss familiar issues in their everyday life, like doing homework, they were not able to do it. The Finnish teacher students were unsure how many of the students really understood the context of the lessons even if they were able to repeat the teacher's talk in English. In the English lesson students were able to read the text but not able to make questions from it. In other lessons the Finnish teacher students noticed that the Village School students were often not able to understand orders given in Eng-

lish. These observation notes and discussions with the Ethiopian teachers were the starting point for planning activities for the Finnish teacher students' second visit.

6.2 Second visit: improving the students' English skills

As I have noted in Chapter 2.4, teaching in Ethiopian schools is given according to MoE policy (1994) in 23 local languages at grades 1 - 4, after which it is given in English. Amharic is considered as the major language in the whole country, and it is taught as one subject. Teachers brought up the difficulty of using English in the first cycle.

> Teachers from grade 5 to 8 are teaching in English. Those teachers have difficulties in their English language. They don't have problem with Maths, Physics, Science or others. The only problem is how to use the language. We would be happy to get training. (Abraham, secondary school, male)

The challenge concerning students' English skills was raised by the Finnish teacher students in the third cycle. Until then, some student-centred methods were used occasionally during the lessons, but lessons were still mainly based on lecturing. When the Finnish teacher students came to the school, teachers experienced, for example, using games and drama as teaching methods. When lessons are based on lecturing, students mainly sit silently and write notes. Drama, games and dialogue teaching methods challenge students to be more active verbally. This introduced a new demand: students' English skills were very modest and they were not able to express their thoughts in English. They had learned to read, write and repeat written sentences fluently, but producing their own sentences was considered challenging. The Finnish teacher students observed that the Village School students were able to repeat very elaborate details, for example, from history or social science, but when they were asked simple questions or opinions, they did not understand the question or were not able to answer in English. This shows that students are used to rote learning, but not at producing their own speech in English.

> Our problem was that teaching language at the upper grades is English, but students were necessary not able to speak English. We felt that they did not understand what we were teaching about. – We might have pronounced English in different way than their teachers or maybe it was just because they are used to the method where teacher lectures and they just listen. When we discussed with them and asked them to work in groups we realised that it was not easy for them to produce English, even if they were listening and reading English every day. But they were not used to talk English. They are just used to repeat something teacher had said, but not to discuss or to tell their own opinions. (Jenna, Finnish student)

The Village Schools teachers felt that they were not able to discuss fluently with the Finnish teacher students because they were not used to speaking in English. After the third cycle they described that their capability of producing English

had improved in a few weeks. For that reason they wished a second visit from the Finnish teacher students, which was conducted in January, 2014, a year later.

In the spring of 2013, the Village School was given a license to establish grades 9 and 10 at the school. According to the inspector of the educational office, this was given because of the school's activity in their CPD-programmes. Our action research especially at the school had improved the opinion of the decision makers. Grade 9 was established in September, 2014, and grade 10 a year later. The Finnish teacher students' second visit concentrated on the grade 9 students' spoken English skills. The English teachers Fekede and Abraham participated in this cycle by planning and implementing extra lessons for the students after school with the Finnish teacher students. These lessons consisted of games, songs, drama and other kind of activities to improve the students' spoken English. This extra-curricular teaching was given for two weeks every afternoon after the school lessons.

6.3   Summary of the third cycle: "I see my students in a new way"

The third cycle was considered meaningful among the Village School teachers, and can be considered a turning point for the Village School teachers concerning the use of student-centred teaching methods. Co-working with the Finnish teacher students introduced the teachers a new kind of teaching culture based on collaboration. In the last cycle the three key-informants continued working together.

> We have seen a lot of change. When we are using such kind of methods and activities, they (students) are happy to do such kind of things and they are happy to practice. (Abraham, secondary school, male)

My role changed from leader or trainer to advisor and facilitator, while the Village School teachers took more responsibility in the activities. I replaced some teachers as a substitute teacher when they were absent. I taught a total of five lessons (math, English and social science) with only a chalkboard and textbooks as materials. I got an experience of the reality Ethiopian teachers are facing every day. I tried to include as much student-centred teaching method into my lessons as possible and use the context familiar to the students.

> I worked today as a math teachers at the Village School. I had to teach 60 students and use only a chalkboard and a textbook. We made calculations about the price of gasoil and changes in the price, and also about the prices of the vegetables at the market. These are issues familiar for the students. I was not as familiar for the students as their own teachers are and they were very silent and obeying. But also very active, they participated a lot. (My diary, 25.1.2014)

Outcomes

The following outcomes took place during the third cycle:

1) The Village School teachers told that their spoken English skills improved significantly during the third cycle's visits. Participants spent time together not only during the school days but also evenings and weekends. Students were invited to visit teachers' homes.

2) The cycle strengthened Ethiopian teachers' co-operation when they observed lessons together and discussed them. Teachers described that they enjoyed working together and were motivated by co-working.

3) Together with Finnish teacher students the Village School teachers had a chance to try new ways of teaching based on SCL. They prepared learning games, used new kinds of problem-solving tasks, drama and different kind of group activities inside and outside of the classroom. Using the garden for teaching purpose was new for teachers. They experienced a new kinds of teaching material that participants made during the cycle by helping students to learn, but at the same time they were concerned about the shortage of materials at the school.

> The other thing that was new for us, we don't use different teaching methods or materials. We have shortage of materials. When they were using the materials, our students easily understood what they were doing. They were picking up different sentences in English and joining (connecting) the sentences. At that time they learned a lot. (Abraham, secondary school, male)

> But what I fear is that we don't have materials. If we ask for paper, we may not get it. They prepared games using papers. We don't have the paper and I only have to tell them what I have in my mind. They become only the receivers. (Fekede, secondary school, male)

4) The action in the third cycle encouraged girls to take a more active role in the classroom, especially in English and sport lessons. Girls took part in the learning games in more active ways which was observed by teachers:

> The students paid lot of attention to girls' role. They pushed them to be active and praised them. Girls and boys play together. The participation of the female students has made the training more active. (Amanuel, secondary school, male)

5) Some Village School teachers said that their relationship with their students changed during the third cycle. The friendly attitude of the Finnish teacher students was observed by the teachers. Fekede noticed that he started to look into their eyes, talked with them and walked more between them during the lessons, which had not been the culture at their school before. This was surprising, because we did not pay any specific attention to friendliness or attitude. Also the changes in girls' activity indicated changes in relatings to them at the school.

> They are friendly. They were supporting all students equally. I realised that I don't need to be angry or severe. I can smile to my students and be friendlier. I am glad I saw how your students face our students. (Fekede, secondary school, male)

6) Seating arrangement in the classrooms was changed in order to better enable SCL methods. While the Finnish teacher students observed the lessons, they questioned the seating arrangement where the teacher dominates almost half of

the space in the classroom and students sit tightly at the back of the room. This arrangement is suitable for lecturing, but when the students wanted to move around the class advising the groups, it was difficult.

> For example most of the time we may teach our students by being in front of them. But these students are moving here and there between our students. This is a good culture. (Fekede, secondary school, male)

> Also they (Finnish students) exchanged from one group to another group. This is not habitual. And what I want to add is that they check each group. They ask if there is anything that is not clear for them. And students try to tell if something is not clear for them. This has to be practice also in our context, our school. (Abraham, secondary school, male)

Challenges

Both the Finnish teacher students and the Village School teachers told that especially making new material with limited resources demanded a lot of creativity from them. They were challenged to create games and other activities with only textbooks, teacher's guidance books, copy paper and material found from nature. Participants described that they were empowered when they found out that they can create new ways to teach with small and limited amounts of material.

In this cycle participants from two different cultures worked closely together. Giving critical feedback for the Finnish teacher students who were considered as guests caused them at first to feel uneasy. In that situation I discussed first with the teachers and then with the Finnish teacher students about the challenges faced during the lesson. The fact also that the Finnish teacher students were well aware the weaknesses in their lessons and had brought up the issues helped the Village School teachers to discuss them openly.

Different conceptions of time were trying, especially for the Finnish teacher students. If they were told that school starts at nine in the morning, they were at the school well before. Ethiopian teachers came late and were surprised that the Finnish teacher students were there already. Sometimes the lessons of the day that had been planned were cancelled suddenly, which caused anxiety among the Finnish teacher students.

7 CYCLE 4: THE NEW COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL CULTURE
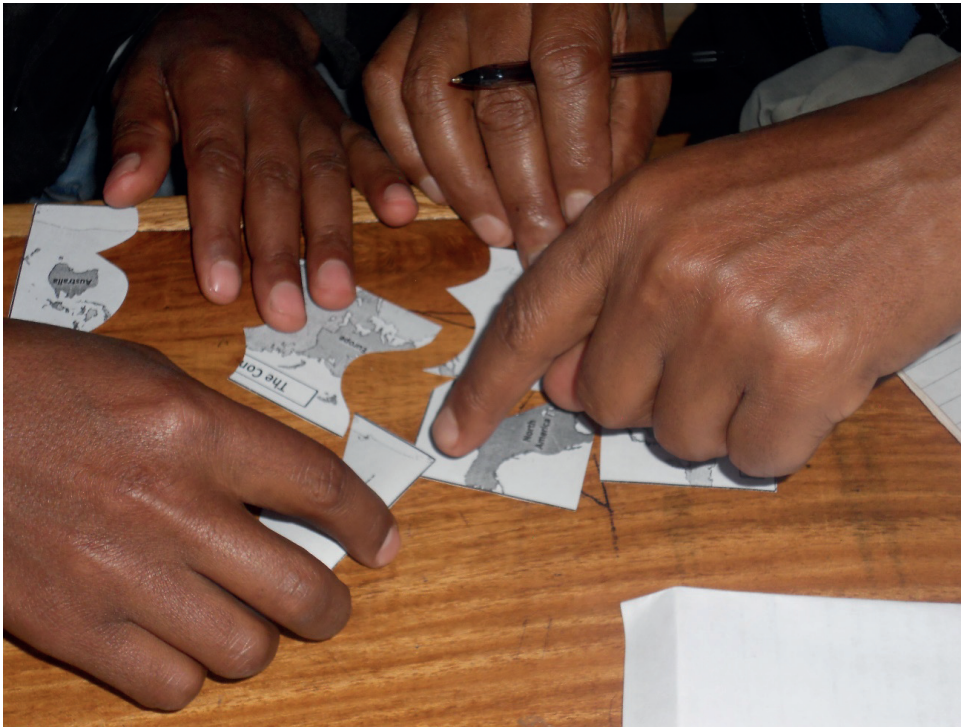
The fourth cycle was conducted between February, 2014, and June, 2015, when the final interview of three key informants was made. The goal set by the teachers was to continue using the SCL methods as a part of their lessons. This cycle included the following steps:

1. Planning: The Village School teachers continued to use the student-centred methods by themselves.
2. Acting: Three key informants established a new collaborative culture at the Village School and support each other in using SCL methods.
3. Observing: Key informants followed each other's lessons, giving feedback and working as assistant teachers.
4. Reflecting: Final discussion in June, 2015, with three key informants

7.1 Teaching together

I did not live in Ethiopia during the fourth cycle and the activities of the cycle were completely planned and implemented by the Village School teachers. I visited the school twice during the cycle, in October, 2014, and June, 2015, and discussed with all the participants. During my visits I spent a few days with the teachers at the school and we discussed the teachers' experiences and the challenges concerning the SCL method. Most of the teachers at the school had been able to continue using the student-centred methods as a part of their lessons. For example, group work and mind maps were used in most classes and the teachers began their lessons by asking the learners' about their prior understanding of the subject instead of lecturing. However, using the SCL method was still considered difficult.

> I am using mind map a lot. When we are learning something new, I first collect students' knowledge about the issue to the chalkboard. (Mulatu, secondary school, male)

> I try to use new method, but because I don't have any material, it is often difficult. (Taddese, secondary school, male)

Three of the teachers, Abraham, Fekede and Taddese, were remarkable active in developing their own work in the fourth cycle and became the key-informants of this last cycle. I decided to interview them individually after the discussions with all the teachers. My aim was to clarify what kind of activities they had planned and carried out and how our project had encouraged them into this kind of activity.

In the final interview they told that they had started to teach together. First they observed each other's lessons, talked about them afterwards and gave feedback. They did this every time they had free lessons in the middle of the school day. They had also worked as assistant teachers in each other's lessons, planned and taught together. This kind of co-operation between teachers was new at the school. The key informants of the last cycle were:

Fekede, 24-year old English teacher. He finished his Master's degree during the fourth cycle and was chosen to the position of vice school director at the Village school.

Abraham, 28-year old English teacher. His had finished his Bachelor's degree and started the studies of a Master's degree.

Taddese, 25-year old history and social science teacher. His education is a Bachelor's degree.

7.2   Career stories and teachers' motivation

During my visit at the school I discussed with the teachers their career stories. Many of them were teachers only because their grades in the 10th grade had not been good enough for other occupations, and they were eager to change their job.

> Because my parents were farmers, I did not have a chance to go to university. I entered teacher training centre after 10th grade and did my diploma there. One reason (why I did not want to become a teacher) was when I compared income of teachers and others, the income of teachers was less and I did not want to become a teacher. (Mulatu, secondary school, male)

> If I get alternative, I will exchange it. But when I stay here, I work hard. (Mulatu, secondary school, male)

Fekede was one of the exceptions. He told that he had always wanted to be a primary school teacher.

> I entered university straight from 12th grade and did my degree there. I got a job in Village School after graduation and I have worked here since that. I love teaching. Nowadays I am also doing administrative work because I work as a vice school director, but I enjoy teaching more.

> I am doing my master's degree at summer school. It takes four years to finish it. I do it privately in Hawassa University, I am paying my studies by myself. I do master's degree for two reasons: I will get better salary and I can improve my knowledge about pedagogy and my own subject. I am very interested to develop as a teacher. I feel I can support my students to be good citizenships and provide them strong knowledge about the subject I am teaching.

> I enjoy teaching together with other teachers. I feel we support each other's when we share our experiences and we help each other's to develop professionally. There are some challenges as being a teacher, but I am working to improve them as much as I can. (Fekede, secondary school, male)

The career stories of the Village School teachers show that for many of them a teacher's job was not the first choice of career. A desire to "get out of" teaching relates to the way many teachers feel about the profession, and it affects the motivation to work as a teacher. In Ethiopia, there are obstacles in recruitment of teachers. There is lack of individual choice when determining who becomes a teacher. Low grades are needed to get onto a teacher training track, which means that the students with the lowest grades are selected for teacher training. This affects the quality of teachers and leads to a built-in-desire to leave teaching. Teaching is considered as a "career of last resort," and it contributes significantly to a negative view of the profession. (Sarton et al. 2009.)

According to the teachers of the Village School and other research (Abebe & Woldehanna, 2012), lack of motivation and interest in teaching are partly a result of low salaries. A teachers' salary is not enough to cover basic needs, like food and rent. Rapid inflation has increased the price of food items, transportation and rents. The amount spent on food and household living has taken a greater proportion of salaries. In other research (Sarton et al., 2009), teachers have described being "trapped" in teaching, with no chance of achieving the same level of salary as workers in other sectors. Many teachers work on weekends and holidays in the private sector, which means they do not have any time for rest. (Sarton et al., 2009.) The study by Gemeda & Tynjälä (2015a) shows that low salary and the absence of a link between performance and reward are the two most important factors influencing teachers' motivation for teaching and professional development. Low pay for teachers has a devastating effect on the whole process of education by demoralizing teachers, devaluing their work and causing teachers to leave for better paying professions. (Sarton et al., 2009.) In Ethiopian rural schools, motivation is associated with the possibility of securing a transfer from the poorly resourced schools to those with better facilities and infrastructure. It is also connected with promotion to the level of unit leader or school director. School-based and locally administered reward systems, as well as community recognition, play a part in motivating teachers to make an effort to perform better and develop professionally. (Abebe & Woldehanna, 2013.)

As I mentioned in Chapter 4.3, the teachers of this study explained that, because of low salary, the status of teachers also has declined. Sarton et al. (2009, 33) found out that teachers perceive their status and value as very low and feel that their treatment by society, the community and all levels of government adds to this. In this research, some teachers felt that there had been a weakening of the respect shown by students towards teachers, and that poor behaviour was on the rise. They thought that one reason might be their declined status. One teacher described that students wear better clothes and use better phones than teachers, and therefore dismiss teachers.

Leadership is one factor that affects teachers' motivation in their work. Sarton et al. (2009, 9) show that weaknesses in management and support were one of the main reasons for teachers low motivation in their jobs in Ethiopia. This included a weak relationship between teachers and school directors; an authoritarian system and top-down approaches from the woreda (local bodies that look after education in small regional areas). The leadership culture at the Village School is described more closely in the next chapter.

Questions about teachers' motivation are very important. Motivation encourages teachers to develop continuously, improve their qualifications and stay in the profession (Abebe & Woldehanna, 2013; Karabenick & Conley, 2011). Additionally, motivation is related to the energy teachers expend in helping their students to learn. Highly motivated teachers can translate into good performance and improve the quality of education delivered to students. (Sarton et al., 2009) Motivated teachers are often interested in taking part at in-service training, which has an impact on students' learning and achievements (Kara-

benick & Conley, 2011). According to research (Feldhaufer, Midgley & Eccles, 1988; Ross & Cousins, 1993, as quoted by Karabenick & Conley, 2011), there is a link between teacher efficacy and student efficacy and achievement as well. Students who are learning in a school or classroom with motivated teachers may be more interested in their education and less inclined towards absentee-ism and dropping out from their school (Woldesenbet 2015).

7.3 Reflecting on the culture of leadership

During the last cycle, Fekede was promoted to the vice director's position at the Village School. He was taking more care of administrative work instead of teaching. Before we had discussed the hierarchical system of the schools and the teachers had told me that in the Ethiopian context school directors had to be respected even if sometimes their leading policy was not much liked or approved. The teachers said that criticizing the school director's acts was not accepted in the school culture. In the final discussion, Fekede was excogitating his way of leading. Fekede thought that his relationship with teachers might be different than usual because he knew the situations that teachers were facing in their daily work. Abraham confirmed that Fekede's and teachers' relationships were equal.

> I think they (teachers) are not afraid of me, because they know me very well. They know my behaviour. – There is a mutual relationship, positive relationship between me and teachers. (Fekede, secondary school, male)

> I simply understand what they face and we communicate together to solve such kind of problems with them. School directors should be teachers first. (Fekede, secondary school, male)

> Why would I be afraid of him? He is my relative, he is my friend. – We discuss together and we solve the things that may hinder our teaching-learning process. (Abraham, secondary school, male)

At the Village School both the director and the vice director had worked before as regular teachers and they knew the reality of teachers' work well. The study by Gemeda and Tynjälä (2015b) indicates that schools in Ethiopia are facing a lack of qualified principals. According to interviewed teachers, the problem has been created deliberately by the government with the intention of controlling the school system. Respondents claimed that the recruitment of school princi-pals lacks a scientific basis, and that they were chosen based on their loyalty to the ruling regime. According to Gemeda and Tynjälä (2015b), unsatisfactory leadership in learning threatens the quality of teachers' professional practices and the collective capacity of their schools.

As Abraham explained, he could talk with Fekede about teaching and the difficulties in his work without fear. Fekede's understanding attitude towards teachers comes true in his sayings and doings, which affect to the relatings:

> He is my relative, he is my friend. – We ask a lot of questions to share and to get information. If you are afraid of someone, you may lose something that may help you. – We see each other as brother and sister, as younger and older. We discuss together and we solve the things that may hinder our teaching-learning process. (Abraham, secondary school, male)

> I learn many things from Abraham. Abraham may also learn many things from me. (Fekede, secondary school, male)

Fekede was one of the most active teachers at the school, participating in all the activities and developing the school culture. In the study of Abebe & Woldehanna (2012), teachers and head teachers assert that a good school administrator can mobilise school resources, including teachers, to improve education quality. The teachers thought that the head teachers managed the day-to-day activities of the schools poorly and did not give attention to supervising how the teaching–learning process was carried out in the classrooms. At the Village School, now, as the vice director, Fekede was in a position to support professional development of his colleagues at the school. In collaboration with other key informants, he started new kinds of activities, aiming at the use of SCL pedagogy at the school.

7.4 Summary of the fourth cycle: Developing professionally together

The fourth cycle was planned and implemented by three key informants: Fekede, Abraham and Taddese. English teachers Fekede and Abraham developed new forms of co-teaching at the Village School and started a new culture of collaborative working. The idea of co-teaching arose from their need to share thoughts about teaching with each other. In the final discussion they described that co-teaching and following each other's classes had developed their teaching skills, and they had been empowered by other teachers' advices. Fekede finished his Master's degree during this cycle, and Abraham started the same education in Hawassa University.

The outcomes of the fourth cycle were:

1) Most of the teachers were able to continue using SCL methods individually as a part of their lessons. Three key-informants used SCL methods constantly and described their teaching culture as "being changed radically."

2) Teachers took responsibility of the AR and planned activities that supported their professional development instead of taking orders from top-to-down. This kind of activity was, for instance, teachers' gatherings in the tea hut. The tea hut in the school garden is a place for collegial meetings, sharing experiences and supporting each other in their professional development.

Fekede spoke about "horizontal learning" when he described learning from colleagues. Before, teachers' did not have chances to meet and discuss their work very often, but now Fekede started the regular meetings in the tea

hut to solve this problem. In this kind of meeting, teachers discussed students' behaviour problems and other kinds of challenges, and how they had solved them.

> This is how we can develop professionally, not only by doing Master's or doing Doctor's, but through process, through communication, through experiences. It is one way. (Fekede, secondary school, male)

> Sharing experiences together at staff level. The other is work training, like you and we joined last year. (Fekede, secondary school, male)

3) Daily co-working between teachers increased and strengthened. A new school culture based on collegial support was established by Fekede, Abraham and Taddese. They described that by teaching together they had learned new knowledge. Their teaching skills and their attitude towards their work also had changed. They also thought that they were developing professionally continuously, mainly due to their close relationship by through daily discussions and supporting each other as teachers. This kind of collaborative sharing and working was new at the school. In research literature, professional development is conceived more and more worldwide as collaborative (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Professional learning means continuous collaboration instead of working separately in closed classrooms.

4) The leading culture of the school changed towards a democratic, equal relationship between the vice-director Fekede and other teachers. Fekede was encouraging his colleagues in their professional development, and arranged opportunities for meetings between colleagues.

Challenges also occurred. Not all of the teachers were able to conduct teaching based on student-centred learning. They said that they would have needed closer and more continuous support from outside in order to be able to use the SCL method. I returned to Finland before the fourth cycle was completed, and was not able to support teachers in their work anymore. I had contact with a few teachers randomly by Facebook, but because there is no network in the village it was impossible to have contact regularly. It may be hoped that the most active teachers like Abraham, Fekede and Taddese could support other teachers at the school, as well as implement SCL activities, and that Fekede as the new vice director would help the teachers to develop professionally.

For me, returning to Finland to my job as primary school teacher offered me a chance to use student-centred teaching methods in my own teaching. I took part in developing our local curriculum, accomplished new ways to teach and educated other teachers in our area about new curricula. I felt strongly that having worked with Ethiopian teachers at the Village School had encouraged and supported me in my professional development. In Finland I was suddenly "a teacher as a researcher" beside my work as a primary school teacher, which empowered and motivated me considerably.

8 ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS AT THE VILLAGE SCHOOL

In this chapter I will summarize the four action research cycles conducted at the Village School in 2011 - 2015 with 23 primary and secondary school teachers. The activities of each cycle are described in more detail in chapters 4 - 7, but this chapter gives a summary of what was done and how. This chapter aims to highlight the second research task, which was to follow the changes in the participants' teaching methods and their professional development. It will also clarify the third and fourth research tasks; that is clarify the cultural-discursive arrangements, the material-economic arrangements and the social-political arrangements and changes in them.

8.1   Summary of the action research activities

- Research task 1: To describe the stages of the process to give an idea what kind of activities the action research included, how it was planned and why the research took the form it did

- Research task 2: To follow the changes in the participants' teaching methods and their professional development

This action research started by discussing with the Village School teachers the challenges that they had at their school. The goal of the AR was chosen by the teachers according to their current need. The teachers decided to arrange activities that would support them in developing new teaching methods based on student-centred learning. Their goal was to learn and use these methods instead of traditional teaching methods like lecturing, copying and rote learning. Each of the four cycles had individual sub-goals and activities planned by teachers (Table 9). The action was structured according to the MoE's recommendations and publications (2009). The project included activities, like workshop, planning lessons together, videotaping the lessons and co-teaching with Finnish teacher students. Action of cycles 1, 2 and 3 were part of the school's CPD programme and were compulsory for all teachers.

TABLE 9   Conclusion of the action research at the Village School

Cycle	Goal	Activity	Participants
1	Deeper knowledge about SCL methods	Workshop about SCL methods	23
2	Using SCL methods as a part of the lessons	Planning lessons together, videotaping them, giving feedback	23
3	Developing own, culturally suitable teaching methods based on SCL	Co-teaching with Finnish teacher students	23
4	Using SCL methods independently	Collaborative teaching	3 key informants

At the beginning of the AR process, the teaching at the school was based almost only on lecturing. Most of the teachers knew the student-centred pedagogy well at theoretical level, but because they had always been taught by a teacher-centred way, it was very challenging for them to use different kinds of methods. Later, most of the teachers were able to use some teaching tools based on SCL.

> Theoretically we have learnt student-centred method in TTC, but practically we have learnt it here, during our project. (Abraham, secondary school, male)

> For me, seeing the Finnish students to use very different methods than we do, was the most important point. That time I understood how I could use the student-centred way of teaching in my class room. (Fekede, secondary school, male)

At the end of the research project, teachers were asked to consider to what extent they were able to continue using the teaching methods based on SCL (Table 10). Most of the teachers confirmed that they would continue using some of the activities learned from the AR project. For instance, mind maps were used by many teachers to find out the students' existing knowledge about a subject. The math teachers had started to use games related to students' everyday life because they motivated the students significantly.

TABLE 10   Changes in teachers' teaching methods

Statement	Percentage of teachers
"My teaching methods have changed permanently and my lessons are based mainly on SCL."	13% (3 teachers)
"I will continue using the teaching methods based on SCL at least as a part of my lessons."	70% (16 teachers)
"I am not going to change my teaching methods."	17% (4 teachers)

Additionally, the spoken English skills of most teachers improved especially during the third cycle when the Finnish teacher students visited the school. The teachers used words such as "joy" and "motivation" when they described their emotions towards the action research project. In the final discussion in June, 2015, key informants Fekede, Abraham and Taddese reflected on their motivation to their work as teachers and to their development professionally having risen significantly due to action research and their close co-working in the last cycle.

> I benefitted of the project and I use some student-centred methods in my teaching. But I would have needed more support to use the methods more effectively. (Tigist, primary school, female)

> I am used to teach by lecturing, I have done it for decades. I am retiring soon and I am not going to change my way to teach now too much. I try to change something because government asks me to. (Samuel, primary school, male)

> This project has been a turning point for me, I have changed as a teacher a lot. I really enjoyed working together with my colleagues, Finnish students and you. I started to see my students in different way. I am using student-centred methods permanently in my lessons. (Fekede, secondary school, male)

Changes did not occur in the teaching methods only, but also in teachers' thinking and attitudes. At the beginning of this research, the teachers discussed the main goals of education, and they emphasized "strong basic knowledge" and "surviving well in annual tests." The role of the teachers was, according to the teachers, to offer this knowledge for the students. Professional development was understood as gaining more knowledge of the teachers' own subjects and learning more effective teaching methods in order to transfer the knowledge to the students. Many of the teachers said that they would start to use teaching methods based on SCL only because they needed to obey the government's order. During the research project, most of the teachers began to see that, while

they were using new teaching methods like games, the motivation of the students increased, the girls became more active during the lessons and the English speaking skills of the students' improved. This empowered teachers and encouraged them to use the new kind of teaching methods.

The professional development of the participants can be seen in their strengthened capability to use teaching methods based on SCL, new kinds of attitudes towards their job, increased motivation, a willingness to develop more and increased collaboration with colleagues. The teachers felt that doing the research together offered them a chance to work together and share their job experiences with their colleagues. This supported their professional development and increased their motivation significantly.

8.2   Practical arrangements in the Village School

• Research task 3: To determine the cultural-discursive, the material-economic and the social-political arrangements at the school and how they enabled or constrained using the student-centred teaching methods

As I explained in Chapter 3.4.5, the cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements exist in some form in any social situation, and they "hang together" in places, in practices, in human lives and in traditions (Kemmis, Heikkinen, et al., 2014). Sayings, doings and relatings are part of the everyday school culture and all the practices there, and they are difficult to separate (Figure 8). For example, in this research, "professional development" can be seen in many ways: as "doing" (workshop), "saying" (how teachers, MoE or inspector describe it verbally) and "relatings" (CPD as government's order and policy).
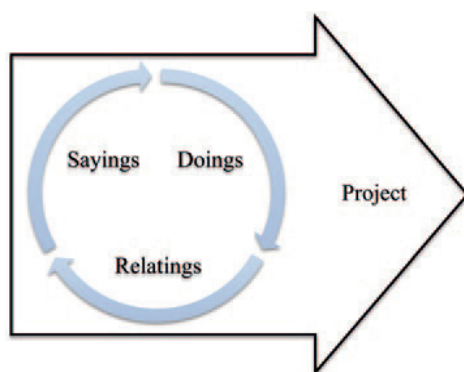

FIGURE 8   Practices are composed of sayings, doings and relatings that hang together in projects (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014, p. 33).

I will take a closer look into three different kinds of arrangements at the Village School, even if they are, as said, often difficult to separate from each other.

Material-economic arrangements exist in the dimension of physical space-time and enable and constrain how we can do things in the medium of work and activity (Kemmis et al., 2012). The everyday spaces of the Village School teachers are the classrooms, the school, the school area, including the tea hut, and the village where the children with their parents live (Table 11).

TABLE 11　　　　　Material-economic arrangements at the Village School

Material-economic arrangement	Arrangement at the Village School
Physical surroundings	school buildings (old and new)
	class rooms; desks, chairs, chalkboard,
	student-teacher ratio
	seating arrangement
	tea hut
	village
	large garden
	football field
	school library
	teachers' recreation room
	the director teachers' office
	light, ventilator
	long distances
	salary
Material	textbooks, teachers' guidance books
	chalkboard
	curricula
	annual tests

The physical surrounding of the Village School are composed of several buildings. Lessons take place only inside the rather small and very crowded classrooms. Working in groups is almost impossible in the classrooms with 60 or more students. Half of the space in the classroom is reserved for the teacher and the desks are located very tightly on the other side of the room. The teacher teaches at the front and does not walk among the students. The only teaching materials are a chalkboard and a few text books shared with several students. Computers and Internet are often used in student-centred learning to enable students to search for information by themselves. At the Village School there is no Internet connection and the school library is very modest, with only a few and mainly dated books. Therefore, teachers and textbooks are the only sources of information. Teaching students to search for information by themselves would require a wider range of resources.

Many positive indications in teachers' speeches were connected to the tea hut and teachers' recreation room, which represented places of meeting, sharing experiences, professional development and peer-group support. In their daily work, teachers had only short breaks between lessons, and often they spent those few minutes in the teachers' rather small recreation room. In this

room they had a chance to play chess, drink coffee and watch television. Often the time was far too short for any of these activities. Teachers did not have a chance to meet each other often in the tea hut, but when they gathered there, meetings were peaceful with no hurry. In the tea hut, teachers had a chance to meet colleagues while drinking coffee made by the traditional coffee ceremony. Before the hut had been used more often, but at the time it was used only on special occasions. With the new vice director (Fekede, one of the teachers) the question of using the hut more often was brought up again, and Fekede made a plan for regular meetings.

Negative feelings were related with the classrooms and the school buildings. As I have described, classrooms are often very crowded and teaching is seen as difficult, with insufficient teaching materials, desks, chairs, light or ventilation. Most of the teachers lived outside of the village in bigger town nearby. In the village of their students there were no rental apartments available, and many teachers were not able to build a house of their own because of their low salaries. Lack of apartments led to long commuting distances from home to the school, often on foot. In interviews, the teachers described these kinds of factors as not only causing tiredness and stress for them, but also affecting the way they worked. Teachers are often tired because of physical demands like long walking distances from home to school, high temperatures in the class-rooms, or long working hours, and these factors influence the teaching process.

A strict curriculum and annual tests are part of the material-economic arrangements of the school. They draw strict lines that teachers have to follow. The curriculum is very detailed and prepares students for annual tests. Teachers have to cover all the content listed in the curriculum and this does not leave place for time-consuming learning methods like group working. Teachers prefer lectures, to insure that they have covered everything in the curriculum.

Social-political arrangements exist in the dimension of social space, and they enable and constrain how we can connect and contest with one another in the social medium of power and solidarity (Kemmis et al., 2012b). The social relationships play an important role in the Ethiopian context. In the discussions, the Village School teachers described their relationships with parents, students, other teachers, villagers and the school inspector (Table 12).

TABLE 12   Social-political arrangements at the Village School

Social-political arrangement	Arrangements at the Village School
power hierarchy	MoE, the government federal region zone (woreda) local school
social relationships and hierarchy	inspector school director teachers parents students villagers, the elders children's role in the local culture girls' and boys' roles

Cultural norms play an important role in Ethiopia and the society is highly hierarchical. Elders of the village are respected and heard. The older or more educated teachers are honoured among the younger teachers. Traditionally, teachers have been highly respected among the villagers, but teachers now are told that due to their low economic status the situation has changed, especially in the eyes of younger people. Teachers earn less than the merchants in the village, and this has caused loss of respect among many students and villagers. Low economic status has also complicated the male teachers' capability to build their own houses and to get married.

The schooling system is highly hierarchical, as I have clarified in Chapter 2.3. The managerial and administrative structure of the education system has different layers; federal, region, zone and school. Teachers at the Village School are under the supervision of the local zone (woreda) authorities. The inspector visits the school regularly and gives his reports about the school and teachers. He is the governmental representative whose duty is to make sure that teachers teach according to the curriculum and governmental policy. School directors and teachers can be re-located according to their management and behaviour. Teachers describe that they lack mental freedom and that they are forced to fulfil the education policy even when it is very difficult. The local inspector of the Village School area also followed this action research project carefully.

Children's role and relationship to parents, teachers and villagers affects the practices at the school. In Ethiopia, children have not been traditionally encouraged to be an active part of the society. They are expected to obey and not take an active part in discussion. Questioning the ideas of parents or teachers is not accepted according to the culture. This kind of culture considers the teacher as a leader and supports teacher-centred learning methods. For children it is very difficult to take an active role in their learning and to take a conversational role in the classroom. Girls especially found it very difficult to talk in front of the classroom or express opinions of their own. Using dialogue or debate as a

learning method was considered complicated. Teachers said that for them to use open conversation as a teaching method was very difficult because they were seen as authors and they had to know where the discussion was about to lead.

In the classrooms, I observed that boys were often more active in answering the teacher's questions than girls, and even when both raised their hands, teachers often asked boys to answer. In sports lessons, girls often sat at the side of the sports field while boys were playing. The teachers said that this is a very common phenomenon at the school. Making girls more active is challenging in every subject. They esplained that the culture encouraged boys more than girls to take part and be active in social situations, even in the families. Children in general, especially in rural cultures, are not usually encouraged to express their opinions in families.

Cultural-discursive arrangements exist in the dimension of semantic space, and they enable and constrain how we can express ourselves in the social medium of language (Kemmis et al., 2012b) (Table 13).

TABLE 13   Cultural-discursive arrangements at the Village School

Cultural-discursive arrangements	Arrangements at the Village School
Language	Language policy at the Ethiopian schools (Amharic, English, the local languages)
Sayings	How the parents discuss and understand the importance of the schooling
Understandings	How the parents understand the importance of education

These arrangements are seen in sayings and understandings. According to the language policy grades from 1 - 4 are taught in the local language. At the Village School, it is the first language for the majority of the children. At the same time, Amharic and English are taught in the lower grades. When the students enter the fifth grade, all the lessons except Amharic are taught in English. Until the fifth grade, students have not been able to achieve sufficient English skills to understand teaching and to express their opinions in English. The teachers' capability to teach in English also varies a lot. Only few teachers were able to express themselves fluently in English. The language problem affects the way teaching is arranged at the school. Teaching cannot be based on dialogue, because the language skill of students and teachers is not sufficient. Therefore, teachers prefer lessons that are planned beforehand and based on lecturing rather than using dialog as a teaching method. The same problem is faced in other sub-Saharan African countries as well. According to Benson (2004), bilingual teachers in developing countries are especially challenged, because they are often undertrained and underpaid, and must function in under-resourced schools with undernourished students. They are expected to teach beginning

literacy in the first language, communicative language skills in the exogenous language, and curricular content in both.

The way parents understand the meaning of education and how they discuss it, affects the way children value the schooling, and therefore it affects also the practices at the school. The Village School teachers told that some parents are illiterate, and this causes some problems at the school. Children start the school at a late age, they arrive late to the morning classes or stay away long times at home without coming to school. Helping their children with homework may be difficult for illiterate parents, too.

8.3 Changes in practical arrangements

- Research task 4: To clarify how the cultural-discursive, the material-economic and the social-political arrangements at the school changed during the AR project and how they enabled or constrained the new kind of activities at the school.

During this research, the most visible changes occurred in the material-economic arrangements in the classrooms (Table 14). Before, the classrooms were considered as only a place for learning, but during the research the teachers started to use the garden as well for learning purpose. They sent some groups during the lesson to play learning games outside while others worked inside the classroom. During the visit of the Finnish teacher students, the seating arrangement at the Village School was questioned and changed in some classrooms. After these changes, teachers were enabled to walk around the classroom among the students. They said the change of the seating arrangements caused changes also in their relationships with students, which is a part of the social-political arrangement at the school.

> I can walk nearer to my students and I can see what they have written to their exercise books. This helps me to follow their learning much better than before. (Fekede, secondary school, male)

TABLE 14   Changes in the practical arrangements

Arrangement	Changes at the Village School
Material-economic	seating arrangement new teaching/learning material new learning spaces
Social-political	relationships of teachers and students relationships of teachers relatings of boys and girls
Cultural-discursive	improvement in teachers' English skills strengthened collaboration between teachers increased activity of girls

Teachers started to use already existing materials in new, creative ways. They developed games with the Finnish teacher students to activate students in ways different than before. For example, empty water bottles, stones and paper were used as teaching materials. According to the teachers, these games activated (especially the girls) to discuss and use their English skills more than before, or to participate in the sports lessons. The games used in English lessons helped students to produce their own speech, and to speak in English instead of simply repeating rote learned sentences.

> Girls and boys are not used to play together in sports lessons. In this kind of practices and games they can play together naturally and they are suitable to our culture too. (Amanuel, secondary school, male).

Participating in this research offered teachers a chance to discuss their work and its challenges frequently. This caused changes in the cultural-discursive arrangements at the school: teachers started to talk more about the challenges in the classrooms and teaching methods they used. Teachers said that talking with colleagues helped them to develop professionally and raised their motivation towards their work. These collegial meetings among teachers also achieved changes in social-political arrangements by strengthening their collegial relationships. Teachers started not only to discuss work more closely, but plan and implement lessons together. A new kind of collegial culture was established by three key informants and strengthened co-operation among the other teachers, too.

The way teachers discuss education and understand the concept of professional development is part of the cultural-discursive arrangement of the school. Changes in them took place during the action research project. During the first and second cycles they talked about "your project," "your methods," or "Kati's research." The professional development and CPD activities, like workshops, were considered to be something brought from outside and stated by the government. Learning the new teaching methods based on SCL were seen as a command given by the government that teachers had to obey. They attended the workshop and other activities, but mainly because they were part of the CPD-programme of the school, planned according to the governmental policy. Later, in the third and fourth cycles, teachers started to use sayings like "our project," "my development" or "our research." This new kind of understanding enabled teachers to take more active roles in our research and made changes in their professional development possible.

9   DISCUSSION

This chapter will continue the discussion about the challenge of using the SCL methods in the Ethiopian context and the cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements that enable or constrain the practices. Recommendations based on this research are given, and the research process will be reflected upon in this chapter as well.

9.1 Why do the student-centred teaching methods not "fit in" into the Ethiopian context?

The starting point of this research was the policy of the MoE, according to which the student-centred pedagogy should be used in every school and by every teacher. This AR and other research (Abebe & Woldehanna, 2013; Frost & Little, 2014; Gemeda et al., 2014) have shown that deploying this method has been very challenging, and that teaching is still mainly based on traditional methods, such as lecturing and rote learning.

This research shows that current arrangements support more teacher-led teaching than student-centred learning methods. For example, the detailed curriculum and annual tests force teachers to use lecturing, because they have to cover the content which is very wide. If teachers use more time for group activities or dialogue during the lessons, they do not have time to teach the content that is enquired by the curriculum. The detailed curriculum with wide content, annual tests and large groups make student-centred teaching difficult. In Serbessa's (2006) study, when asked why teachers are using the lecture method strategy, 86.6% of teachers responded that the lecture method of teaching is more suited to the current curriculum and students' backgrounds. In the same research, most teachers (85%) complained that the teaching materials are full of large amounts of information to be memorised by students, and teachers feel responsible to cover the curriculum in the available time. The teachers (87.5%) replied that the only way they can "get through" their subject in the available time is to deliver it in a formal, didactic style, with as little "distraction" from students as possible. (Serbessa, 2006.)

The government's order to prepare detailed annual, weekly and daily lesson plans and close follow-up in classes of 60 - 80 students is considered extremely stressful. Teachers describe the situation in rural areas as demanding overall for the teaching process because of, for example, long distances and working hours, low conditions of class rooms, high temperatures and lack of materials. Therefore, teachers feel that they do not have the capacity for other teaching activities at the school, like CPD activities, follow-up of the students and preparing the lessons based on student-centred methods.

The seating order in the classrooms do not enable active learning methods like group discussions, drama or games. In this research, the seating order where the teacher dominates at the front of the classroom and students sit tightly at the back of the classroom, was questioned by the Finnish teacher students. A new kind of seating order enabled better follow-up of the students' progress when the teacher was able to move to middle of the students. Serbessa's (2006) study also found out that the classroom seating arrangement in Ethiopian schools do not allow teachers to employ active learning. Front to back seating arrangements encourage one-way communication and discourage students to discuss among themselves.

Lack of materials hinders the use of student-centred methods, especially at the governmental schools and rural areas. Lack of material like computers, proper libraries or text-books make the use of the SCL method difficult. In Ethiopia, 41.0% of primary schools and 92.8% of secondary schools have adequately organized libraries (EFA, 2015). Private schools, which collect student fees, have better possibilities of purchasing materials. At the Village School, teachers are in need of even basic materials like copy paper and pencils. An Internet connection is not available in the village. In the study by Serbessa (2009), the majority of teachers (79.2%) replied that they were constrained by the lack of adequate resources from using an active learning approach. The available teaching aids were only used by teachers to assist their lectures.

Student-centred learning methods emphasize the activity of students. They are supposed to take a responsible role in their learning instead of receiving information from the teacher. However, obedience and politeness are the overriding goals in bringing up children in Ethiopia, and children are taught to fulfil without question any request made by any older person. They are disciplined to ensure that they obey and respect the decisions taken by their elders and accept their place in a hierarchic social order. (Kjorholt, 2013; Serbessa, 2009.) According to Serbessa (2009), the traditional education and the Ethiopian tradition of child upbringing do not provide a good learning climate for employing an active learning strategy. Making students, especially girls, more active is difficult. Also the low level of students' fluency in spoken English makes it even more challenging.

During this research, the relationships between teachers and students changed to become more equal, and teachers described that they began to see their students "in a new way." This meant a more open, friendly relationship, which enabled a more equal dialogue between teachers and students. After the project, teachers described that their relationships, especially with older students, had changed "dramatically" and made it possible the better follow-up with students. The communication between teachers increased, and the research supported professional dialogue and collaboration among teachers.

The theory of practice architectures, which was used in analysing the data of this research, showed that the teaching methods based on SCL and the prevailing arrangements at the schools do not "fit together." Either changes in these practical arrangements are needed, or the teaching methods have to be developed to be more suitable with the culture and not transferred straight from other cultures. Education does not happen in a vacuum, because the surrounding people, culture, history, material environment and political decisions affect the way how education is seen and conducted. For these reasons teaching methods developed in other contexts do not necessarily function in other surroundings.

If changes in prevailing practices are wanted, it is necessary to provide new ideas, resources and new kinds of relational support to make those practices possible. In the context of this research, this means establishing new languages appropriate to the new ways of teaching, constructing spaces and times

and physical resources appropriate to the activities based on student-centred learning. It also means connecting the people involved – students, teachers, parents and governmental representatives – in new networks of relationships. (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014). All these have to be made in a genuine context with all stakeholders, including the teachers.

Changing the school culture is a slow and challenging process, because it demands changes not only in practical arrangements, but also in teachers' thinking. According to Kimonen and Nevalainen (2005) the opposition to reform may be a result of a conflict between the teacher's own beliefs and the new ideas. Changes in teachers' ways of teaching require changes in the beliefs, values, expectations, habits, roles, and power structures of the teachers. Therefore, reforms in curricula or equipment only do not necessarily have an impact on teaching (Kimonen & Nevalainen, 2005). In Ethiopia, the prevailing school culture and thinking of teachers are still based on very traditional values, where the teacher is believed to be the only source of information and the main value of education is to give students the basic knowledge and to prepare them to manage well in the annual tests. The conflict between teachers' values and beliefs about education and the new ideas may be one reason why teaching methods have not changed during the last few years, despite of the MoE's attempt. One of the Village School teachers felt that negative attitude was one barrier for using teaching based on active learning methods. He said that students were used to receiving the information from the teacher and not in participating actively in the learning process. However, teachers described later that their students were highly motivated when teachers used SCL methods like group working or everyday-related tasks.

9.2 Implications and recommendations

This research showed that the practical arrangements at the school do not support teachers for using SCL teaching methods. For instance, detailed curriculum, annual tests, seating arrangements, cultural factors like child upbringing and lack of materials lead teachers to use lecturing, and make student-centred teaching methods very difficult. Changes in practical arrangements are needed if teachers are expected to use SCL methods effectively. Alternatively, new teaching methods can be developed in their genuine context with teachers to ensure that they are suitable in the local context. Transferring teaching methods that are planned to serve different kinds of school cultures do not necessarily function in other kinds of surroundings.

This research showed also that the AR project conducted with the Village School teachers supported them in their professional development by raising their motivation and increasing the collaboration among teachers. During the research, more teaching methods based on SCL were put to use, and as a conclusion we can state that a classroom culture towards a more learner-centred

approach was improved during the research. The recommendations based on these implications are given in this chapter.

Curriculum

According to this study, in order to launch new teaching methods successfully in an Ethiopian school context, major changes need to be made. Curriculum reform is needed in any case on to a national level (Moon & Wolfenden, 2012) and it cannot be transferred from other kinds of cultures. For instance, the Village School teachers said that using methods like debate or dialog are difficult in the Ethiopian context because children are expected to obey the teacher and not to question an older person's speech. The teacher has to know beforehand where the discussion is going. In addition, the culture of lecturing and rote learning derives from the time of church education, and has strong roots in history. Changing this culture by bringing new methods does not happen in a short time.

According to Serbessa (2009), "The attitudes and expectations of society in general and of the family of the learner in particular affect how learning is viewed and how teaching is organized. These attitudes and expectations vary from society to society, and attempting to copy a learning and teaching strategy from one society into another without trying to adapt it to the local conditions may not be successful." In Serbessa's (2009) study, when asked why teachers are using the lecture method strategy, 86.6% of teachers and 81.3% of students responded that the lecture method of teaching is more suited to the current curriculum and students' backgrounds, and 90.0% of teachers and 82.7% of students replied that teachers are using this method because they know it very well. Action research is a one tool in creating new, contextually-suitable teaching methods. For instance, action-oriented research among the Guji Oromo people in southern Ethiopia documents that storytelling can be used in primary schools, both as a valuable bridge to connect learning to local life and knowledge, and as a participatory approach to engage children in the process of learning. (Jaleta and Benti, 2013; Kjorholt, 2013.)

I also suggest that the curriculum would be modified in order to support SCL methods. The current curriculum is very detailed and teachers are pressured to "cover the content." This makes using SCL methods difficult. Detailed annual tests force teachers to cover everything in the curriculum to prepare students for the tests instead of taking the time for deep learning and understanding. The implementation of active learning requires a certain amount of time to think and explore. Such strategies take more time than a straight lecture. (Serbessa, 2009.) The MoE policy to launch SCL methods into the schools, annual tests and the detailed curriculum do not "fit together," and changes need to be made either in the policy or the curriculum.

Teachers interviewed for the USAID report (2007) described that the way the curriculum is organized and the types of questions included in exams make it more difficult for them to devote time in class to organizing group work and other, more participatory activities, or to asking students to answer higher cog-

nitive-level questions. Because of a detailed curriculum and examination system, there is pressure for teachers to cover as much material as possible and, when there is time, to ask students questions, to see if they can recall what they have been taught.

Student-teacher ratio

The number of students in most classrooms is too high in order to use group working, dialog or drama effectively as teaching methods. In Ethiopia, the student-teacher ratio is considered to be a critical indicator of quality education in all class levels (MoE, 2010b). Although the government targets for student–teacher ratios (primary schools 50, secondary schools 40) have been met in a majority of the schools in urban areas (MoE, 2010b), many children in Ethiopia are taught in very large classes (Abebe & Woldehanna, 2013). In order to implement teaching methods that activate students more, either the PTA needs to be made smaller, assistant teachers have to be added or, as one solution, teaching space could be reconsidered. At the Village School, all teaching activities occurred in the rather crowded class rooms. During the AR project, we did some activities like games in the school garden, which gave more possibilities for the students who remained in the class room.

Materials

I would suggest that attention continue to be given to sufficient and suitable teaching and learning materials. Currently there is lack of textbooks, teacher guidance books and basic materials like chalks, pencils and paper. If several students are using the same book together, their progress is insecure. Access to extra materials like library books or Internet would support students in finding information by themselves, but currently these are not available in the majority of rural schools. At present, 22.2% of secondary schools have Internet access, and about 76.1% of secondary schools have access to electricity (EFA, 2015).

In addition, teachers said that the existing material are planned predominantly for an urban setting, and are too detailed. The guidance books and the textbooks are now planned to prepare students for the annual tests, which increases the teachers' load to cover the content, and do not support them for using teaching based on students' activities, which often requires more time than lecturing. New material based on SCL pedagogy need to be made to replace the current material.

Teachers' participation

To be able to implement SCL methods, teachers need be encouraged to develop contextually suitable ways to teach based on student-centred learning pedagogy. Until now, teachers have not been part of the development processes, but have received orders given by the MoE from top-to-down. Their participation in policy, curriculum and textbook preparation and involvement in decision-making processes would be useful because teachers best know the context and situation of the schools. Instead of a top-down approach, which leaves the

teachers feeling that they do not have a real personal investment in the programme, teachers should be made participants in the development programmes. Instead of "one-shot" workshop, teachers could be encouraged to implement development projects in their own contexts (Gemeda & Tynjälä, 2015b). This research showed that AR has positive impacts on teachers' motivation and commitment.

In the study of Gemeda and Tynjälä (2015b), it was reported by the participants that the existing CPD programme was planned centrally and prescribed by the central government for implementation. The participants claimed that there was a mismatch between the government's demands and the teachers' needs. Teachers described the CPD programme:

> We were not asked what we need, what skill gaps we have or, what suits our context and so on. We were all made to participate in the same professional development program that didn't address our needs. So, we have accepted it half-heartedly since we didn't have any other option. (Gemeda & Tynjälä 2015b).

The participants of this study expressed the same kind of feelings:

> Teachers try to satisfy the interest of the government policy and their own career. - Teachers are in difficult situation. (Getahun, primary school, male)

According to Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al. (2014), changing professional practice requires commitment of the practitioners of the profession, and the school system wanting to change its teachers must create very specific kinds of conditions under which teachers can change. In the situation like Ethiopian teachers are facing now, they should be considered as agents of the change, not just implementers of the government's new idea or policy. In a study by Sarton et al. (2009), teachers did not feel involved in decision-making at the national level, nor did most feel that they were able to influence policy discussions or areas such as curriculum development. Teachers considered frequent policy changes as demotivating, adding that "policymaking does not take local context into consideration."

Teachers as researchers

This and other research (Worku, 2014) show that action research projects support teachers at their work and increases their collaboration. AR is closely related to teacher empowerment and has become an important component of what is considered good teacher development in Ethiopia (Dagnew & Asrat, 2016). In a situation where teachers' motivation at their work is low as it is documented in Ethiopia (Gemeda & Tynjälä, 2015a; Sarton, et al. 2009), collaboration among teachers can have a positive effect on motivation (Abebe & Woldehanna, 2013.) Conducting participatory action research offers teachers a way to work effectively together, but teachers need to be supported by adequate training and guidance. In addition, schools and teachers need to be able to use the findings of action research. An exchange of experience between schools' AR has to be strengthened. In USAID research (2006), the participant teachers revealed that

there is no mechanism to present the results of the schools' own action research projects. Some of them said that they have presented it to the education offices through school directors, but no response or feedback was given.

The Village School teachers said that their work is exhausting due to many factors that are described in Chapter 4.3, and they do not have the time or energy for extra activities. In order to implement SCL pedagogy successfully at the school level, teachers need more time to prepare their teaching, reflection and discussion with colleagues. USAID (2010, p. 12) research states that "if teachers are expected to work in a different manner than they have in the past, then they must be given both time and space necessary to work in this new model. It is not realistic to assume teachers' instructional behaviours will be substantially altered if their daily schedules and work profiles remain unchanged."

Workshops on how to conduct school improvement projects like action research have been arranged already all over Ethiopia. Studies made by USAID (2006) investigated how action research has been done in twenty primary schools in nine regions. From 509 teachers who responded to the questions, 186 (36.5%) claim to have done action research and 323 (63.5%) did not do action research. From those teachers who did action research, 19.8% presented the results to stakeholders, and 15.6% used their research results to improve their teaching situation. The most frequently addressed objectives by the research were to promote students' learning (23.0%), solve everyday practices (19.9%) and improve classroom instruction (17.4%) (USAID, 2006, pp. 63 - 69). The major reasons why teachers showed less participation in action research were lack of interest due to lack of training, lack of incentives, fear of collegial mocking, lack of facilities at the school, perception of action research as a complex process, large class size and high work load (USAID, 2006).

Salaries
The decline in teachers' salaries and their status has been documented in Ethiopia (Gemeda & Tynjälä, 2015b; Sarton et al., 2009) as well as all over sub-Saharan Africa (Colclough, Al-Samarrai, Rose & Tembon, 2003). Participants of this AR said that their salary is not enough to cover living expenses. While the budget has been added to education, it has not been translated into teachers' salaries. Low salary affects teachers' motivation and appreciation among villagers and students. In order to motivate teachers to stay in their work and to attract new candidates, salaries should be increased. Dagnew & Asrat (2016) recommend in their study that the government should give attention to teachers' job satisfaction in order to find out how the factors like salary and status affect their performance.

Teacher education
In 2003/4 Ethiopia introduced the Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) with a new curriculum promoting active learning and student-centred approaches. The aim was to replace the traditional teacher-centred approach with active learning (Serbessa, 2009). However, researchers have identified major

challenges to the implementation of student-centred teaching in Ethiopian schools. Teachers of the Village School indicated that it was very difficult to start using SCL methods while they had never seen anyone use them and their training did not enhance them with adequate skills.

According to Abebe & Woldehanna (2012), one of the major challenges related to teacher training and professional development is that both pre-service and in-service has not given due emphasis to content knowledge and modern pedagogical styles. This makes the education system suffer from teacher-centred teaching. In Serbessa's study (2009) conducted in Ethiopia, teachers responded that they are teaching the way they were taught in schools and teacher training colleges and institutions, which is the result of the Ethiopian tradition of teaching. In this study, the Village School teachers invited the Finnish teacher students to their school so as to see them use SCL methods in practice. Teachers said that seeing the Finnish teacher students teach helped them invent new ways of teaching.

The challenge between traditional and new teaching methods in teacher education is faced by other sub-Saharan African countries as well. Nketzia's (2017) research showed that in Ghana there is limited emphasis on child-centred teaching approaches in the colleges of education. According to Nketzia, teacher educators should be given in-service training courses, after which they could model the inclusive and child-centred pedagogies by adopting them as their teaching methods. This would prepare new teachers to adopt pedagogical approaches like SCL. I agree with Abebe & Woldehanna (2012) in their statement that teacher training institutions should equip prospective teachers with the pedagogical skills that enable them to provide active learning and child-centred approaches in schools. I also suggest continuing the CPD activities, which focus on how to help teachers make classes more active and participatory.

9.3   Reflections on the research

9.3.1   Action research as a research approach

This research showed that action research is a suitable research approach in the Ethiopian context for four reasons. First, it is accepted and encouraged by the government. The MoE encourages schools to conduct AR in their local contexts at all school levels (MoE, 2009) in order to meet the challenges in the teaching-learning process and raise the quality of education. Instead of "top-down national priority driven professional learning opportunities" and "one-size-fits-all' strategies for improvement" (Gemeda & Tynjälä, 2015b), action research offers a tool for doing research suitable for each school context, aiming at the real needs of the school. Even though the MoE encourages schools to commit their own action research projects, training or suitable materials about the action research method is not widely available, and using the outcomes of the schools' AR projects is not common (USAID, 2006). Publications of the MoE

(2009) give some guidelines as to how the schools should commit their projects to aiming for continuous professional development, but often these publications are considered rather theoretical.

Second, AR has practical impact to teachers' everyday work instead of only stating the problems. This research aimed to find and create new, culturally suitable, student-centred teaching methods in a rural Ethiopian context.

The "fruits" of our AR process are still alive and going on. The majority of the teachers have continued the co-teaching, and are using the teaching methods based on student-centred learning. This research enabled the Village School to get its licence for 9th and 10th grades, which has benefitted the families in the village and many villages nearby. Now the students do not have to move to the next largest town or quit their studies after having finished 8th grade, but can live at home for two more years. This has great value financially for parents.

Third, AR encourages teachers to take an active part in their own professional development. According to Ferguson (2011), support for professional development through AR builds on a model of learning, where practitioners are challenged and helped to find new ways of doing things. The emphasis is on practice rather than subject knowledge. This research started, according to the principles of AR, with the question made by the Village School teachers: "How could I improve my work?" This research encouraged teachers to take an active role in their professional learning by planning, implementing and reflecting on the process. Even though all teachers did not became active in the process, most of them were able to take new teaching methods into use and three of the teachers created a new kind of co-working culture at the school.

Transforming the school system which has long roots in the history and is based on the culture in Ethiopia, requires transformation in teachers' thinking and practices. To create a new school context, teachers need to reflect critically on their own principles and practices and transform those. (Kimonen & Nevalainen, 2005.) The route of action research is personal enquiry (What do I do?) rather than others' advice (What do you think I should do?). In the Ethiopian context, teachers are used to taking orders from above and teachers in African countries often see themselves as government servants. Teachers consider themselves as "deliverers" of a nationally-decided curriculum, rather than as "reflective practitioners." (Stuart & Kunje, 1998.) In this research, the Village School teachers were challenged to take a responsible role in their own development. This AR challenged participants to examine the process they had gone through to achieve a better understanding of themselves, and this enabled participants to develop themselves individually and their work. In addition, it encouraged them to reflect and self-evaluate.

Fourth, it offered an opportunity to create forums in which teachers joined one another as co-participants. According to Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon (2014, p. 33) "- one of the most important things that happens in critical participatory action research is simply that participants get together and talk about their work and lives." Teachers of this research said that their collaboration had

strengthened significantly during the research. They shared concerns and experiences about their work more than before and planned lessons together.

Challenges

The action research plan is created during the research, and cannot be planned beforehand. Even when the plan has been made, it can change during the research process. This kind of uncertainty was sometimes challenging for me as a researcher. I had to keep in mind not to lead or plan the research, but let the teachers do it. For teachers planning and implementing research, this was new. In Ethiopia teachers are used to taking orders from top-to-down, and some of them were not able or willing to participate in the research. Most of the activities were part of the school's CPD programme and compulsory for all teachers. All teachers described these activities (workshop, planning the lessons together, working with Finnish teacher students, group discussions) useful, empowering and motivating. On other hand, giving critical feedback for me as a foreigner would have been considered very impolite in the Ethiopian context.

The professional development also was considered, especially in the first cycles, as something the teachers had to do because the MoE demanded it. The amount of hours spent in the CPD programmes is indicated in the instructions, and all teachers have to keep a diary of how they have collected these hours. In the beginning of the research only a few teachers described that professional development is something they wanted or needed, or something that empowers them as teachers. CPD was rather seen as a "must" and a "top-to-down demand" that teachers had to obey.

Some of the teachers were not able to use SCL methods individually. They would have needed more intensive and continuing support, but because I lived far from the school and teachers did not have an Internet network at the school or at homes, my support was casual and my visits at the school rare. I hope that those teachers who were able to use SCL methods successfully would be able to support other teachers as well. Fekede, one of the key informants, was chosen to the position of vice-director during the last cycle, and he started the regular meetings for teachers in order to support them in their continuous professional development.

Insufficient spoken English skills of the teachers complicated communication between the Finnish teacher students and the Village School teachers. For me, discussing in Amharic about certain subjects was also sometimes rather challenging because I was not used to various different dialects. This may have caused misunderstandings, which I have tried to minimize by using Ethiopian assistants to translate the data.

Political tensions and the hierarchy of the education system were some of the sensitive or politically forbidden issues that I was not allowed to discuss about some sensitive or politically forbidden issues with teachers. When I tried to ask about corruption at schools or teachers' relations to the ruling party, the school director forbad me to address these issues. Subjects related to sexuality

or sex education were also too sensitive to discuss due to cultural and religious reasons.

Our research project lasted several years and included several recorded group discussions and interviews, but also a large number of unofficial discussions during the school days. Often I was not able to record these discussions, and made field notes afterwards. These notes are not as detailed as the transcripts made from the recordings would have been.

9.3.2   Trustworthiness and limitations of the study

To enable readers to assess the trustworthiness of the research, I have tried to give an honest and explicit description of the research process and the methods used in collecting and analysing the data. Transparency of the research process has been considered as a key criterion, and a detailed explanation of the project is provided in Chapters 4 - 7. In this research, participants were explained the broad objectives of the research and were assured of confidentiality. Triangulation was gained by discussing my interpretation with Ethiopian educational experts at several times during the research.

Heikkinen, Huttunen & Syrjälä (2007) use five principles for judging the quality of action research from a narrative point of view: principles of historical continuity, reflexivity, dialectics, workability and ethics. This research was not a pure narrative, but can be examined through some of the principles. According to these principles, a good action research narrative acknowledges the past course of events that have shaped the present practices. I have tried to view the practices and conditions at the Village School as a part of history and culture of Ethiopia. For that reason I have clarified the history of Ethiopian education and the research context in Chapters 2 and 3.3. The cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements define how the practices are enabled or constrained in an Ethiopian rural school context. Sayings, doings and relatings define how teachers are able to use student-centred pedagogies in the Ethiopian context and to develop professionally.

Good action research, according to Heikkinen et al. (2007), is reflexive and elaborates the story dialectically. A good researcher is aware of his or her knowing and is able to reflect it. Radnor (2002) also emphasizes that the researcher cannot remove her own way of seeing from the process, but she can engage reflexively in the process and be aware of her interpretive framework. The researcher makes decisions about what kind of questions he or she asks. The transcripts are not neutral representations of what was said and how it was said. A transcript is a *representation* of the researcher's views, mind-sets and theoretical orientation (Honan, Knobel, Davies & Baker, 2000). During my visits, I was sometimes very tired after having driven from long distance and a few times I had problems with my health. Those physical conditions probably affected my capability to see all that would have been relevant. At the time of this research I had lived in the country for several years and was familiar with the culture and language. Still, my pre-assumptions and cultural lenses were based on my culture in Finland. It is important to analyse the relationship between the research-

er and the object of research (Heikkinen et al., 2007). As I have described in Chapter 1.3, the object of the study is shaped by my own identity as a teacher, a woman, a Finn and as an NGO worker. I was the research instrument who affected the way this research was conducted. I have described my pre-assumptions in Chapter 1.3 and clarified my data collection and analysis methods in Chapter 3 so as to give the reader a view as to how the research was done and how the conclusions were made. The participants' voices have been presented by adding their quotations.

According to Radnor (2002, p. 40), "Validity of the findings is helped by being able to separate a descriptive analysis from interpretation. The descriptive analysis enables the reader to gain a picture of the subjects under study – hear their words, get a sense of their actions and their context and know that there is more where that came from." In this research my goal has been to describe the context as much as possible without risking the confidence of participants. I have added photos that represent the rural context and teachers' citations to bring up their voices and to show where my interpretations arise from.

AR can be examined also through its workability and the useable practices that, in one way or another, can be regarded as useful. This research helped the Village School teachers to deploy new teaching methods, which activated their students more than traditional lecturing and rote learning. It also helped the teachers to accomplish their CPD programme that is compulsory for all the schools in Ethiopia. Additionally, it supported the teachers' collaboration. One of the practical benefits for the families was the licence that permitted the school to establish grades 9 and 10. The school had applied for the licence several times before, but it had not been admitted. Now the licence was admitted due to our AR project conducted at the school. It was not the goal of this research, but a consequence of it.

The ethics is an essential criterion when examining the research (Heikkinen et al., 2007; Radnor, 2002). In this research, ethical questions were a part of the whole process, and I have brought up these questions in Chapters 3.5 and 9.3.4. The principle of ethics-in-action focuses centrally on the need for the researcher to show respect for the participants. This is achieved in this research through constant sensibility with ethical questions. I asked teachers often beforehand if we could discuss some issue that I knew to be sensitive for them. I wanted to show my respect for the teachers; for example, dressing and behaving in culturally sensitive way, which is important, particularly in rural areas.

The last principle of Heikkinen et al. (2007) concerns the question of evocativeness. It determines how well the research narrative evokes mental images, memories or emotions related to the theme. Even though this research was not a narrative, I have described the action research cycles in a time-linear form so as to give the reader a view of what, when and how we conducted the research at the school. My diary notes and photos are added to enable the mental images and the quotations of the Village School teachers' to articulate their opinions and emotions.

Radnor (2002) emphasizes additionally the climate of interaction, the researcher's attitude and the approach to the people in her study. I have tried to give the reader an understanding of how this rapport was established and trust generated to raise the confidence of the reader in the credibility of the findings. During the interviews and group discussions I tried to inject my opinions as little as possible; I intended to take a role of listener instead of taking too much of a part. My capability to speak Amharic also helped the teachers to describe their feelings in a language more familiar for them than English.

I am aware of the limitations of this research approach. The number of respondents was small and the action research was conducted at one school. I made a decision not to analyse the trainee reports of the Finnish teacher students but in order to have a wider range of data I could have analysed them, too. Other research (Abebe & Woldehanna, 2013; Gemeda et al., 2014) have indicated that rural schools in Ethiopia and sub-Saharan Africa are struggling with the same kind of challenges that this research showed. My goal has been to offer a thick and detailed description of the context at the Village School. Data were collected in different ways: by interviews, group discussions, observation and videos. I have discussed with several Ethiopian educational experts and teachers to make sure my interpretations have been correct and to increase the trustworthiness of the research

AR is open ended. It does not begin with a fixed hypothesis. This research cannot be repeated exactly the same way. The nature of uniqueness is typical for action research. My perception of the educational activities I saw at the Village School and my interpretations are filtered by my theoretical and epistemological lenses. Therefore, repeating the research by another researcher would not be possible. In that sense, the results of this research cannot be generalized. However, I believe that this research's conclusions can be generalized in the rural context of Ethiopia, or even for rural areas of sub-Saharan Africa.

9.3.3 "Your research" or "our research"?

> My relationship with school director and teachers, it's very polite and formal. I think teachers are little bit afraid of me. Or maybe they just consider me as a guest, foreigner, outsider. There is still a distance between us and communication is not very natural. I think they think I am some kind of an expert with my master's degree, doing doctoral research. Hopefully they see soon that I am the one who should learn something from them. (My diary, 4.4.2012 – very beginning of the research)

My role at the Village School community changed during the cycles. My aim was to do participatory research from the first cycle, but encouraging all teachers to participate in the research actively proved to be challenging. Teachers were not used to, willing or able to take the equal role at the beginning of the research. Some of the older teachers were not interested in the project. They participated in the workshop and other CPD activities because they were part of the school's mandatory CPD programme, but they did not want me to participate in their lessons. Three younger teachers became the key participants in this research, and they could be called equal participants. These three teachers

were highly motivated by the research and continued their studies onto the Master's level.

Some of the teachers may have considered me like an inspector and educational expert. It made our relationship unequal and formulary, and they did not support the co-research. Even though planning the action was done by teachers, other parts of the cycle, like observing and reflecting were done mainly by me. The participatory goal succeeded better in the third and fourth cycles, when my role changed from leader to facilitator, and at the end, to observer (Table 15). At the same time, teachers took more responsibility for planning and observing the AR, and at the end three of them led the action independently.

TABLE 15   Roles of the participants

Cycle	Role of researcher	Role of teachers
1	leader	receivers
2	leader	participants
3	facilitator	participants
4	observer	leaders (key informants)

Analysis shows that teachers' commitment and ownership of the research grew during the research. Workshops and extra training were considered positive from the beginning of the project. Teachers emphasized in the first discussions, that they accepted the new method brought by the MoE and they considered it beneficiary for students. On the other hand, because of the political pressure, they would not have been able to resist an order given by the MoE. Because of cultural norms, it would also have been extremely impolite to tell me that they were not interested in doing research with me. In the first and second cycles, teachers talked about "your research" and "your method". The student-centred method was not considered as their own method, but something brought from outside. Teachers were receivers of the information.

> We tried to use your method of teaching. We tried to use different materials like you did. (Taddese, secondary school, male)

Later, in the third and fourth cycles, teachers started to talk about "our research" and "our teaching method."

My role in the village and at the school was something between "insider" and "outsider." Because I knew the language and culture well, got to know many residents of the village and visited several homes, I was not considered as a tourist. I was often told that I was a "habesha" (Ethiopian) because I spoke Amharic and behaved in a culturally accepted way. I was also seen as a friend among some of the teachers, when I was invited to see their new born babies and participate at their weddings. This helped me to gain acceptance among the teachers and families. On the other hand, I represented European "ferenji" (foreigner) with the "right" knowledge about education.

"Outsiderness" and "insiderness" are not fixed or static positions according to Naples (1996). They are rather ever-shifting social locations that are dif-

ferentially experienced and expressed by community members. My position at the school changed not only from one cycle to another, but also according to the situation. When I brought the Finnish teacher students to the school, I was more "insider" and belonged to the staff when foreign students were clearly "outsiders." The place I occupied could be called "space between." According to Hamm (2014, p. 99), "it is not always comfortable, but a place of discomfort may be the best possible ground for challenging assumptions and learning with participants." As a foreigner and outsider I was allowed to ask culturally or politically sensitive questions even though sometimes the school director forbad teachers to give me information about some of these issues.

During my visits at the school I lived in a guest house in the town nearby. The goal of ethnographic research is to experience the same reality than the participants do and I was able to reach the same reality to some extent at the school. Anyhow, after the school days I was able to take a shower and relax in the guesthouse while the teachers walked home for several kilometres and continued their work by planning the next day lessons. I visited the school rarely but the Village School teachers struggled every day with lack of material, exhausting job and high student teacher ratio. In order to share the teachers' reality deeper I should have spent longer times at the school. Therefore this is not a pure ethnographic research but has features of it.

9.3.4   Ethical consideration

> Sometimes I feel that doing this research is constant ethical consideration... The list of ethical questions in my head is endless: Do I lead the research too much? How can I, as an outsider, come to the school and start the research? Do I behave according to the cultural norms? Do I dress appropriately? Can I drive to the school yard by my own car while the teachers walk long distances? How do the teachers benefit of all this? Should I support the school somehow, with material for example or should I not? How can I make any interpretation of the data, how do I know my thoughts are right and correct? (My diary 10.10.2013)

Ethical questions led me to choose participatory action research as the research approach. According to Kemmis (2010), action research should aim not just at achieving knowledge of the world, but at achieving a better world, and not only nurture our understanding, but help us to live well. I felt that as an outsider and foreigner I was not able to justify or to decide what is best for the Village School or how the action research should be conducted, and tried to make the research as participatory as possible. In order to do that, I asked the teachers constantly during the research: How would do continue this research? How do you want to plan the next cycle?

Because of the special relationship between researcher and participants, there is a strong ethical aspect in doing action research and ethnographic research. According to Radnor (2002, p. 30) "the researcher is the research instrument who engages in a transactional process, recognizing that the process is ethics-in-action." As I have noted in Chapter 3.6, permission for the research was asked from the local education office, aims and purposes of the research were revealed at the beginning and teachers' willingness to participate was con-

firmed through a teacher consent form (Appendix 2). I reminded teachers later and frequently that participating in the interviews was voluntary, while workshops and some other actions of the research were part of the schools CPD programme and were compulsory for the teachers.

Action research is a collaborative process and its goal is change. The teachers are encouraged to develop their own practices and their working environment. This raised the ethical question: To what limits are we allowed to change the practices at the school? The transformation of practice is a social process, and since changes are likely to have different consequences, the transformation of practice is also a political process (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014). Action research that brings about changes in sayings, doings and relatings must confront the fact that it changes what is done and cannot be undone. It transforms the world and transforms us (Kemmis, 2010). In Ethiopia, teachers must be aware of their actions and speeches. Governmental school teachers are under supervision, and teachers are expected to obey the higher authority. They may be fired or re-located for political reasons. When we are dealing with subjects like corruption in the interviews, there is a risk that an informant will be recognized and he will have consequences. Teachers at governmental schools have to be members of the ruling party, and they are not allowed to criticise the political or educational system. For these reasons, confidentiality and anonymity of participants is ensured by changing their names, and the name of the village is not told.

The inspector from the local education office took part in almost all activities of the research. I was always a little bit concerned and nervous because of his presence. I knew that without his permission I could not have continued the research. I had to be quite sensitive, for example, about political issues. The turning point in our relationship took place in the second cycle. He had participated in the discussion with videotapes that we were recording in the classroom.

> I was very, very surprised, when the inspector came to me after the school day, hugged me before he left and said: "Kati, we all really love you." It was something that left me wordless, because I had been little bit nervous because of him being at the school. I sensed that my actions at the school were approved and I was able to continue the research freely. (My diary 4.10.2013)

Later I was told that our research process was highly appreciated in the educational office and it was part of the reason for getting permission to establish grades 9 and 10 at the school. He was also willing to arrange the same kind of activities at other schools in the area, and asked the Village School teachers to lead workshops at them. Sometimes I may have been even too sensitive and avoided issues related to politics too eagerly.

> We played today a philosophical discussion game with teachers, also inspector of woreda attended the game. Participants were asked to discuss in groups, whom two they would save from the burning house: a cat, a grandmother, 5-year old boy, prime minister or famous singer. Before the discussion I hesitated if I should add prime minister to the list at all, because I thought teachers would be forced to choose him

because of political reasons. I laughed when none of the groups chose him, not even the one with governmental inspector… Maybe I am the one who is over sensitive with politics. Saving the grandmother was obvious for all the groups, older people are highly respected in this culture (diary 28.1.2012)

9.3.5   Future directions

Principles of student-centred learning are rather well known among teachers in Ethiopia, but further studies are needed to find out how these theories are implemented at the schools, and how they have influenced student's progress and the quality of education. Quality research is needed to highlight emotions and experiences of the teachers in their work.

Action research is not only a research tool but a way to achieve permanent changes and improve the situation at schools. Instead of giving orders from top-to-down, teachers themselves can be encouraged to implement research concerning their own work. Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon (2014) emphasize that only teachers can change teaching practices in local settings, even if they are following advice from elsewhere. Therefore, action research in school contexts would be a suitable tool in Ethiopia to encourage teachers, motivate them and help them to develop their own work in genuine context. In addition, other actor-centred and participatory methods, such as empathy-based stories or visual methods, could be used to increase teachers' participatory levels. These methods might give access to socially and culturally bound individual perspectives without leading the participants in the direction of the preconceived notions of the researcher (Lehtomäki et al., 2013).

As I have said in Chapter 9.2, changes are needed in practical arrangements if teachers are expected to use SCL methods effectively. For example changes in detailed curriculum, language policy, student-teacher ratio and availability of teaching materials are needed. The student-centred methods need to be taught in practical way already in teacher training and teachers have to be heard in developing new teaching methods and curriculum.

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APPENDIX 1

Participants of the research

Primary school teachers (1-4)
Alem, female
Etetu, female
Tigist, female
Fantanesh, female
Kibbinesh, female
Getahun, male
Dawit, male
Belay, male
Samuel, male

Secondary school teachers (5-8)
Martha, female
Tadelech, female
Martha, female
Ayelech, female
Hanna, female
Belaynesh, female
Etenesh, female
Fekede, male
Abraham, male
Taddese, male
Amanuel, male
Maheru, male
Birhanu, male
Endale, male

APPENDIX 2

TEACHER CONSENT FORM

I am willing/I am not willing (please cross out the one that does not apply) to participate in the study being conducted by Kati Keski-Maenpaa from Jyvaskyla University, Finland at the ▨ School, ▨ Ethiopia. The research is an action research and it will be planned and conducted in co-operation with ▨ School teachers.

Part of the action like workshops are school's CPD –programme and compulsory for all the teachers. All interviews, group discussions and videotapings are voluntary. The identity of the teachers will not be releaved and teachers can withdraw at any time from the project (except activities that are part of the schoo's CPD –programme).

Teacher's name:_▨_____

Signature:_▨_____

Date:_ 10.10. 2011_____

APPENDIX 3

THE DATA

Date	Cycle	Data	Participants	Topic	Length
10.11.2011	1	Group discussion	8 teachers	Discussion about the challenges	30 min. (audio file)
10.11.2011	1	Group discussion	7 teachers	Discussion about the challenges	30 min. (audio file)
10.11.2011	1	Group discussion	8 teachers	Discussion about the challenges	30 min. (audio file)
11.11.2011	1	My observation, field notes		Following six lessons in grades 1-8	5 pages
15.1.2012	1	Group discussion	23 teachers	Reflecting the workshop and planning the second cycle	12 min. (audio file)
15.1.2012	1	Speech	a parent	Feedback of the workshop	2 min. (audio file)
20.3.2012	2	Group discussion	23 teachers	Reflecting own teaching	8 min.
20.3.2012	2	Videotape	6 teachers	Teaching sessions	6 x 10 min. (videotapes)
20.3.2012	2	Group discussions	23 teachers	Giving feedback of the teaching sessions	14 min. (audio file)
20.3.2012	2	Group discussions	23 teachers	Discussion about the good teacherhood	9 min. (audio file)
20.3.2012	2	Discussion	2 students	Discussion about the lesson	3 min. (audio file)
	2	Focus group discussion	8 teachers	Reflecting the second cycle, planning the third cycle	6 min. (audio file)
1/2013	3	Videotape		Videotaped document of the project	60 min.
1/2013	3	Trainee reports	9 Finnish teacher students		18 pages
1/2013	3	Focus group dis-	6 teachers	Reflecting the	7 min.

		cussion		third cycle	
1/2013	3	My field notes		Observation during the third cycle	8 pages
1/2014	4	Focus group discussion	2 teachers	Reflecting own teaching	4 min. (audio file)
1/2014	4	Interviews	3 teachers	Career stories	x min. (audio file)
6/2015	4	Focus group discussion	3 teachers	Final discussion	x min. (audio file)
2011-2015	1-4	My field notes			23 pages

APPENDIX 4

Example of transcript and analysis

FEKEDE'S TEACHING SESSION
Cycle 2 (12:59) grade 8, videotaped

T denotes Teacher (Fekede); F and M denote female and male students, U denotes students talking in unison. In classroom there are 56 students. No uniforms. Teacher does not wear the coat usually worn by teachers at the school.

Transcription	Comments
	Teacher writes to chalkboard "English lesson". Closes the door. Turns towards the students. He has a chalk in his hand.
T: Attention please. Good morning students. U: Good morning teacher. T: I think you know that last days we have studied different sentences.	
Today we are going to start another thing. First object is giving advice. Giving advice means – you know it – before I tell you – if necessary – (gives explanation in Amharic).	Goes to teacher's desk, takes his notes. Students are opening their books. They sit with pairs.
	Teachers makes a circle on the chalkboard, writes "giving advices" middle of it. Writes "to whom do you give advices?" outside of the circle. Walks at the front of the students, near to them, has an eye contact with students.
So, to whom do you give advice? You can tell me. To whom do you give advice? Anybody to tell us? Yes, Amare.	
M: To give another body.	Writes "to other persons" on the chalkboard. Students are following, watching teacher, silent.
T: Meaning for other persons. Other persons. Any other? To whom do you give an advice? Yacob?	
M: For teacher.	T writes "to teacher". Students at the front desk laugh, maybe advising teacher is not common.
T: For teacher is also possible. For teacher. Any other? To whom do you give advice? (asks the same in Amharic)	Teacher explains same thing in Amharic to make sure that everybody understands.
M: For friend.	

T: For friend. Very good. Any other?	Writes "for friends"
F: Sick person.	
T: For sick person. Any other? Yes, Amane.	Writes "for sick person"
M: For family.	
T: For family. Very good. For family. For – what did you say?	and "for family"
M: For AIDS person.	
T: For AIDS person. Any other?	"for AIDS person"
M: For lazy students.	Girl at the front raises her hand, but boys tell the answer without raising their hands. Teacher doesn't notice. Writes "for lazy students"
T: For lazy students, good. This is enough. We give different suggestions or different advices for different persons, those who face different problems. Is it clear, students?	
U: Yes.	Teacher walks in the front of the classroom towards students and back to chalkboard. He watches the students. One girl comes late, researcher opens the door. 4:08
T: No we take groups of three or four, three or four. Discuss about how you give different advices to different bodies. Here you mentioned different problems and it is possible to produce different advices to those persons who face different problems. Take a group and discuss how you give advice for these persons. (same explanation in Amharic). I need feedback. After having group discussion I need feedback. Before that everybody discuss in your own group. Try to be not more than five students (same in Amharic). Yes. All of you. You can be together. Discuss about how you can give advices to different persons with different problems. We use here three minutes. Not more than three minutes. Yes. Is it – Yes. Now discuss. Is it clear? (speech unclear for each group, partly in Amharic)	Explains also in Amharic. Walks middle of the students. Helps students to make groups by showing with whom they may make it. Touches students' shoulders and calls them by names.

Teacher advices all groups turn by turn (his speech is low, cannot be transcipted). Makes sure that students know what to do, explains in Amharic for some groups. Gives explanations. All the groups are discussing. Some girls do not participate, they |

	stay silent. There are mixed groups, but some groups consist of girls only or boys only.
Okay. Enough. This much is enough. Then I need your feedback.	
If someone has headache, what would be your advice? You can advise a person who has headache. Yes?	Students turn towards the teacher and chalkboard.
M: I advise him to go to clinic.	
T: Excellent. I advise you to go to clinic. You can give advice through different ways according to situation or according to problem. That's possible. I don't need only one answer, there are different ways.	T writes "I advise you to go to clinic" to chalkboard.
For example, your mother and your father may advice you at home. So, I need a volunteer student. Yacob, could you present? With whom, Haptam? Come and present.	10:00 Teacher asks Yacob to make a presentation. He has been one of the most active students during the lesson. Boys come in the front of the class and have a short discussion (cannot be heard). Other student listen and clap after presentation. Also teacher claps.
(Two boys make a presentation, but their voice is too weak to hear the discussion. One boy has some problem and another gives advices.)	
T: Very good. This much is enough. Nice. I need another volunteer student to give presentation.	
Don't be afraid. Practice makes perfect.	
F: I have a problem. (unclear) What should I do?	A girl and a boy stand up and walk in the front of the classroom. They make a short presentation. Others clap.
M: You should (unclear).	
T: Perfect.	
	12.59

Fekede's lesson, cycle 2, videotaped, analysis, grade 8, 56 students

Elements of practices	Practice architectures found in or brought to the site
Sayings Teacher uses simple English. He explaines most important tasks also in Amharic to make sure that students understand it. Teacher uses students' names and says often "good" or "excellent".	*Cultural-discursive arrangements* The lesson is conducted in English. Mostly spoken language is used, teacher writes some key words and sentences on the chalkboard. Student do not write.
Doings The activity in this lesson is a) introduction to the task at the chalkboard and in cooperation with students b) groupworking and c) reflecting the groupwork. The frame of the lesson is planned by teacher, but everything that is written at the chalkboard comes from the students. Teacher walks around the classroom from group to group and makes sure that every group has understood the task (not common in the context!).	*Material-economic arrangements* The room is not very resource-rich landscape: there is only chalkboard at the front of the room. Half of the classroom is teacher's space and half students' (tables and benches). Two students sit together on the same bench and use same table. This classroom is light and well wentilated.
Relatings Teacher calls the students by names which was different compared to other lessons. He is looking at them, taking contact in that way too. Relationship between teacher and students seems to be warm (lot of smiling, touching shoulders). Students are active; they raise their hands and are willing to answer. Boys get more turns to answer than girls even if they raise their hands.	*Social-political arrangements* Teachers' and students' roles; teacher-student instructions; turn taking.

Elements of pratices	Practice architectures found in or brought to the site
Dispositions (habitus) For the teacher: being an English teacher, activate the students by student-centred teaching methods (note: these methods are new for teacher and students, Fekede hasn't used them before) For the students: learning about giving advices in English, participate the lesson differently than in previous lessons	*Practice traditions* The lesson consisted of introduction, groupwork and reflection of it. This was very new kind of practice both for the teacher and the students. Students had done some groupworking before, but most of the lessons before had been lecturing of teacher and copying the text from chalkboard.