

# The interplay among leadership, language, and curriculum in improving education quality

Getu Shiferaw Wolle 

Associate Professor, Department of Educational Planning and Management, School of Educational Sciences, Bahir Dar University; Associate Editor-in-chief, Bahir Dar Journal of Education

## Abstract

Despite ongoing efforts by governments and substantial investments by donors to enhance the quality of education in Sub-Saharan Africa, tangible improvements remain elusive. Recent studies suggest that the quality of education in some countries has reached a crisis point. This issue of Bahir Dar Journal of Education presents a collection of nine original articles that explore key factors influencing education quality. The articles focus on three primary aspects: the role of educational leaders, the quality and effective implementation of curricula, and the use of English as a foreign language. The current issue also examines the impact of social media use and psychological capital on students' academic performance. The articles span all educational levels—primary, secondary, and higher education—and offer relevant, practical recommendations directed at stakeholders across the education system. Collectively, these contributions aim to inform policy and practice to foster meaningful improvements in the educational landscape.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 20 April, 2025

Accepted: 25 April, 2025

## KEYWORDS

Leadership, curriculum, English as a foreign language, education quality, academic achievement

Research indicates that, despite the implementation of various reforms and initiatives, quality education in many developing countries, including Ethiopia, remains in crisis (Molla & Tibebe, 2023; Negash, 2006). Studies (e.g., Alemu, 2023; Tena & Motuma, 2024) reaffirm that multiple challenges continue to hinder educational quality, despite governments' ongoing efforts and strategic interventions (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2022).

Central to these challenges is a critical yet often underexplored triad: leadership, language, and curriculum. These components are not isolated; rather, they are deeply interconnected, collectively shaping educational experiences and outcomes in profound ways. Their dynamic interaction is essential for fostering meaningful and sustainable improvements in education (Mullen et al., 2005).

For example, leadership plays a catalytic role in enhancing education quality (Pratiwi, 2023). Effective educational leadership establishes the vision, direction, and tone of schools and systems at all levels. Such leaders are instrumental in facilitating curriculum development and ensuring its effective implementation. They influence decisions about what is taught, how it is delivered, and the linguistic medium used. Transformational leaders who prioritize inclusivity, equity, and learner-centered approaches can spearhead reforms that align curriculum goals with learners' real-world contexts. Without visionary and responsive

**CONTACT** Getu Shiferaw Wolle  [getushiferaw2005@gmail.com](mailto:getushiferaw2005@gmail.com)

© 2025 The Author (s). **Open Access.** This article is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/bdje.v25i2.1>



leadership, even well-designed curricula risk remaining inert—disconnected from teachers' capacities and students' needs.

Similarly, the content and context of the curriculum significantly influence the quality of education (Islam, 2019). The curriculum encompasses the knowledge, competencies, values, and experiences that education aims to develop. A high-quality curriculum must be relevant, inclusive, and adaptable (Fiveable, 2024), reflecting the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of learners while also preparing them for participation in a globalized society. Leadership plays a vital role in continuously reviewing and updating curricula to align with evolving societal needs, technological advancements, and the diversity of learners.

Additionally, language serves as the vital link connecting abstract curriculum objectives with learners' tangible understanding. The manner in which English is taught as a foreign language has a substantial impact on educational quality, influencing student outcomes both prior to and after graduation (Nghia et al., 2024).

Therefore, the dynamic interplay among leadership, language, and curriculum creates a synergistic effect that directly shapes educational quality. When leaders advocate for inclusive language practices, they empower both learners and teachers. When curriculum developers consider linguistic diversity, they create materials that are more engaging, relevant, and accessible. When these three elements are aligned and mutually reinforcing, they foster a coherent and responsive education system that advances equity, stimulates creativity, and encourages critical thinking.

Put succinctly, enhancing educational quality requires integrated strategies rather than isolated reforms. The triad of leadership, language, and curriculum—when thoughtfully coordinated—has the potential to transform classrooms, uplift learners, and contribute to resilient, knowledge-driven societies. The journey toward quality education hinges on embracing this interplay with deliberate purpose, insightful planning, and unwavering integrity.

Directly and indirectly linked to these aspects is the impact of technological advancement on education quality. Technology plays a significant role in enhancing the teaching and learning process by improving the skills of educational leaders (Kukulska-Hulmeet et al., 2023; Tolani et al., 2024) and providing students and teachers with access to sufficient, up-to-date information to enrich their knowledge. Additionally, the influence of social media on education quality—particularly its effects on students' academic achievement—should be given serious attention, as it is an increasingly relevant factor (Mahlet & Bamlaku, 2023; Salari et al., 2025).

In addressing the above aspects, the current issue of Bahir Dar Journal of Education features articles related to educational leadership, various aspects of curriculum, and teaching English as a foreign language. This collection of articles covers topics pertinent to primary, secondary, and higher education settings.

In the first article of the issue, Seleshi Zeleke Teketel, Abebe Kibret Assfaw, and Mitiku Hambisa Abdisa report their study investigating how the purpose and duration of social media use influence high school students' academic performance. Their research highlighted the dual potential of social media as both a useful tool and a source of distraction. The study examined the effects of the purpose of social media use, time spent on social media, and their interaction on students' academic outcomes. Findings revealed that over

60% of students used social media for non-educational purposes. Importantly, students who used social media for educational purposes scored significantly higher in subjects such as English, Mathematics, Chemistry, and Physics compared to those who used social media for non-educational reasons.

In the second article, Tesfaye Gemechu Gurm, Getnet Tizazu Fetene, and Abebayehu Aemero Tekleselassie examined the impact of educational policies, collective capacity, and school culture on sustainable leadership in Ethiopian primary schools. Using a case study design, they explored whether collective capacity and school culture policies facilitate or hinder the adoption of sustainable school leadership within the Ethiopian educational system. Their findings indicated that while some policies related to collective capacity and school culture support the development of sustainable school leadership, others tend to undermine or at least fail to promote it. They concluded that, overall, these policies largely undermine rather than support the realization of sustainable school leadership.

Then, in the third article, Yibeltal Asfaw, Mulugeta Yayeh Worku, and Tadesse Melesse analyzed how global neoliberal ideologies influence curriculum changes at Bahir Dar University, raising important questions about institutional autonomy, curriculum relevance, and the commodification of education. Using a qualitative case study approach, they explored the impact of neoliberal policy agendas on curriculum reform. Their findings revealed a significant shift toward vocational knowledge and job-oriented skills, accompanied by increasing disparities, both of which reflect the pervasive influence of neoliberal policies on higher education.

Following this, in the fourth article, Ebabu Tefera Adugna's study focused on the processability of English grammar lessons in upper primary school textbooks. He evaluated how well grammar content aligns with students' cognitive development and learning needs. His study examined the processability of grammatical structures incorporated in grades 3-6 primary school English language students' textbooks currently in use in Amhara Regional State. In his study, Ebabu found out that the grammatical lesson presentations in the four textbooks under study were inconsistent with the developmental sequence of the second language English acquisition process, due to the material writers' complete reliance on a theme-based approach.

Utilizing a case study design, in the fifth article of the issue, Melkam Zewdu Ayalew, Dawit Asrat Getahun, and Reda Darge Negasi identified challenges in implementing competence-based education from the perspectives of faculty and academic leaders, addressing gaps in resources, training, and institutional support. Their study further delineated nine distinct categories of challenges that impede the effective implementation of competence-based education

Following this, Habtamnesh Abera Abegaz, Befekadu Zeleke Kidane and Michelle Stack explored academic staff perceptions of leadership effectiveness in managing change within public universities, focusing on the determinants and status of academic leadership. Using the concurrent embedded mixed-methods design, the researchers examined the status of leadership regarding the implementation of academic-related change schemes and the views about leadership for change in public universities in Ethiopia. Their study indicated that the degree of the practice of change leadership behaviors was at an average position

while the academic leaders' level of resilience was significantly lower than the expected value.

In the seventh article, Worknesh Engidayehu Belay, Arega Bazezew Berlie and Mulugeta Yayeh Worku present their evaluation of the Grade Nine Geography textbook in Ethiopia, focusing on the inclusion of contemporary geographic issues. Their analysis highlights the importance of curriculum relevance to students' real-world understanding. The results from their study revealed despite the fact that the textbook addressed important topics such as population growth, environmental degradation, pollution, deforestation, and soil erosion, these issues were primarily presented in terms of knowledge acquisition, with limited emphasis on developing students' attitudes, skills, and active engagement with these geographic challenges.

Following this, using a quantitative research approach with a cross-sectional design, Fenta Belete Amara, Dawit Asrat Getahun, and Tiruwork Tamiru Tolla investigated the impact of psychological capital on university students' academic achievement, with academic engagement serving as a mediating factor. Their study revealed that psychological capital significantly and positively impacted students' engagement and academic achievement, while academic engagement played a partial mediation role in the relationship between the two variables.

In the final article of the present issue, Andualem Tesfa, Dawit Amogne, Yinager Teklesellassie and Dereje Negede's systematic review investigated the effectiveness of text structure instruction on students' expository writing. Selecting 14 experimental and quasi-experimental studies, their review generally showed that text structure instruction could improve the inclusion of main ideas in written summaries and enhance the quality of expository text structure writing.

In summary, this issue features articles that address critical aspects of education quality across primary, secondary, and higher education levels. The studies present relevant and feasible recommendations for concerned stakeholders to consider. We therefore invite readers to explore each article, enjoy reading, and gain firsthand insights from this publication.

Finally, on behalf of Bahir Dar Journal of Education, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all reviewers and editors for their dedicated contributions and commitment to BJE. I also extend my heartfelt gratitude to the authors for their interest in publishing their work in our journal.

## References

- Alemu, K. (2023) Assessing service quality in tertiary education using adapted SERVQUAL scale. *Cogent Education*, 10(2). <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2023.2259733>
- Fiveable, B., B. (Ed). (2024). *The role of curriculum in education: Curriculum development*. <https://library.fiveable.me/curriculum-development/unit-1/role-curriculum-education/study-guide/n8CZ4QDJpXdxCfI0>.
- Islam, A. (2019). Improving educational quality through curriculum development: An empirical investigation using stakeholder feedback data. *The Journal of Education*, 199(2), 69–82. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26673158>

- Kukulska-Hulme, A., Giri, A., Dawadi, S., Devkota, K., & Gaved, M. (2023). Languages and technologies in education at school and outside of school: Perspectives from young people in low-resource countries in Africa and Asia. *Front. Commun.* 8. <https://dx.doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2023.1081155>
- Mahlet Alemayehu & Bamlaku Alamirew. (2023). The Effect of Social media usage on the academic performance of grade 12 students of Addis Ketema preparatory school, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. *Ethiopian Journal of Business and Economics*, 13(1), 34-56. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ejbe/article/view/262258>
- Ministry of Education (2023). *Educational statistics annual abstract: 2021/22*. Federal Republic of Ethiopia. <https://moe.gov.et/storage/Books/ESAA%202022-23%20Final.pdf>
- Molla, T. & Tibebe, D. (2023). Ethiopia's education system is in crisis – now's the time to fix it. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/ethiopias-education-system-is-in-crisis-nows-the-time-to-fix-it-217817>
- Mullen, C. A., Bobbie J. Greenlee, B. J., & Darlene Y. B. (2005). Exploring the Theory-practice relationship in educational leadership curriculum through metaphor. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*; 17 (1), 1-14.
- Negash, T. (2006). Education in Ethiopia: From Crisis to the Brink of Collapse. nordiska afrikainstitutet, Uppsala
- Nghia, T. L. H., Tran, L. T., Ngo, M. T. (Eds.). (2024). *English Language Education for Graduate Employability in Vietnam*, Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community. Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4338-8\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4338-8_1)
- Pratiwi, N. S. (2023). Educational leadership in improving the quality of school-based education. *International Journal of Educational Narrative*, 1(3), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.70177/ijen.v2i1.414>
- Salari, N., Zarei, H., Rasoulpoor S., Ghasemi, G., Hosseinian-Far, A., & Mohammadi, M. (2025). The Impact of social networking addiction on the academic achievement of university students globally: A meta-analysis. *Public Health Practice*. 9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhip.2025.100584>
- Tena, B. & Motuma, F. (2024). Policy reforms and unresolved educational challenges in Ethiopia: Implications for the University of Education. *Bahir Dar Journal of Education*, 24(1), 147-167. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/bdje.v24i1.10>
- Tolani, C., Negussie, D., & Girma, F. (2024). Navigating the future of organizations through digital transformation and leadership: SLR. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*; 9(5). <https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/IJSRT24MAY1820>