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Reimagining Children's Aspirations and Futures Through Indigenous Education in Ethiopia

Master's thesis in Master of Philosophy in Childhood Studies

Supervisor: Professor Anne Trine Kjørholt

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Abstract

In recent times, the schooling system has faced criticism for its failure to fulfil the promises of realising children's aspirations and futures. A growing body of research epitomizes this profound lack in the system, which is founded on epistemological and ideological traditions. In response to these concerns, there has been a recognition of the virtue and legitimacy of indigenous metaphysics, emphasizing the need to rethink the entire schooling system. Yet, the question remains how schooling can be reimagined in an indigenous context to make it responsive to the visions of the future among children. Studies conducted thus far have not thoroughly examined indigenous ways of understanding futurity in relation to children's aspirations. This study attempts to enquire into this by exploring this through the lens of the intellectual and socio-political ecologies of Ethiopia. I draw on ethnographic research conducted with yeabnät tämariwoc (students) aged 9 to 15, their parents, and other stakeholders in Ethiopia. Data was collected through indigenous methodologies of knowing with attention to the researcher's positionality and reflexivity.

The study theoretically puts forward the tenets of a constructivist approach to unpack how children construct their aspirations and imagine the future through their school and life world. I am also drawn inspired by decolonial theory to examine schooling in terms of the realisation of children's visions of the future. Additionally, it enquires into how children use indigenous and modern schooling for their future aspirations through the Sankofa theory. The question of how children's future is negotiated with their parents and educational policies is inspired by the relational lens. By bringing these theories together, the empirical findings suggest that children's future aspirations are not only located in the present socio-political and economic phenomena but also in a 'forward movement to the past,' where their future is culturally and religiously constructed. This suggests that the underlying secular ethos in the schooling system disconnects children from envisioning their future unless their religious sense of the future, which they believe is the supreme source, is considered. Additionally, the possibility of integrating schooling and indigenous educational systems to explain children's future aspirations is challenged by the fact that the two systems have different ideological, philosophical, and traditional roots. This unambiguously points to the need to explore the fusion of the systems, which could be the focus of future research.

The implication of this study highlights the importance of considering the lived realities of children, challenging unilinear conceptions of their visions of the future solely based on the schooling system. It contributes to the ongoing dialogue on questioning schooling as the only framework for theorizing childhood aspirations and the future. However, the disposition to examine children's visions of the future within cultural specificities may overlook the need for cross-cultural realism, which emphasizes the virtues of humanity and religious essence. This emphasizes the need for scholarly work to move childhood studies beyond relativism and cultural reductionism.

Preface

It has been more than a decade since I joined a higher educational institution in Ethiopia, and during that time, I have questioned why Ethiopia ended up undermining its indigenous educational system in its educational policies. As someone who has experienced this educational system firsthand, I have always recognized the gaps and problems associated with complete reliance on Western-style schooling. Moreover, the way schooling was introduced in the country by condemning century-old traditions and knowledge heritage is often on my mind. While there has been a dearth of studies and recognition among the elites and the public at large about the negative impacts of the schooling system, there has been little understanding of how indigenous philosophies, worldviews, and practices, rooted in the rich knowledge heritage of the country, were used to reimagine children's future and aspirations. This reworks my understanding of how modern schooling could be rethought, what roles indigenous education could play, and how this provides insights about the 'ontological context' for enquiring about children's aspirations and futures in childhood studies. From this base, I wanted to unpack how indigenous education embodies a unique indigenous philosophy to map out an alternative path to reimagine children's aspirations and futures.

An immediate factor that led me to choose this topic was my enrollment in the master's program in Childhood Studies at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). The discussions raised in class were eye-opening for me, as I learned about the Western style of thinking about children's lives and its variance from the social, cultural, historical, religious, and family settings where I grew up. This experience has encouraged me to further contest the rationale of modern schooling and its unforeseen future, taking the perspectives of children, parents, and other stakeholders in the study area.

Yet, this interest was not translated into this piece without the help of several people. It was through Professor Tatek Abebe's insightful feedback that my initial idea took shape before I was assigned to Professor Anne Trine Kjørholt for his sabbatical leave. Her comments were the nucleus of the paper in shaping the logical connections across chapters and in reminding me to refrain from normative statements, which sometimes cropped up in the discussions of the issue. Her emotional support was an addition to encouraging me to apply my efforts to the best of the thesis. With this, however, the study was not materialized without the participation of yeabnät tāmariwoc (students), their parents and Yenetas (headteachers), traditional elites, elderly people, schoolteachers, and other stakeholders. I would also like to acknowledge the financial aid from the Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education (DIKU) through the Norwegian Partnership Program for Global Academic Cooperation (NORPART) Project, which was led by Professor Tatek Abebe. I also received assistance from Rakeb Desta who helped me generate the map of the study sites using ArcGIS. I did not forget the emotional encouragement of my friends for the back pain and sitting difficulties I had while writing the thesis. I thank them for their support before I went to the hospital. I would also like to thank *Mahbärä Qəddusan* (Association in the Name of the Saints) and Department of Sociology at Addis Ababa University for their support letters. Finally, many thanks to Dr. Gerda Wever from The Write Room Press for her edits of the thesis.

This work is dedicated to traditional elites and scholars who paid a lot to preserve the indigenous educational system and are still teaching in various Gubae Bets (indigenous schools) in Ethiopia and outside.

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List of Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini
AU	African Union
CSA	Central Statistical Authority
EOTC	Ethiopian Orthodox <i>Täwahädo</i> Church
EPDRF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
FMH	Federal Ministry of Health
FMoE	Federal Ministry of Education
MK	Mahebarä Qedusan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSD	Norwegian Centre for Research Data
NTNU	The Norwegian University of Science and Technology
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TV	Television
UNCRC	International Convention on the Rights of the Child

Chapter 1: Introduction

If society is to advance, education is considered key, especially primary education, which is preeminent in the economic and social transformation of any nation (FMoE, 2021b). To this end, Ethiopia has adopted four educational policies, including the fourth one endorsed recently in February 2023 after the first policy was implemented in 1945 during Emperor Haile Selassie I (FMoE, 2023; Negash, 1990). The educational reforms carried out so far across regimes have shown remarkable success in the net primary enrolment rate (FMoE, 2021b). Currently, the Federal Ministry of Education is working towards achieving a 100% net enrolment rate in grades 1-6 (including Alternative Basic Education) and increasing it in grades 7-8 from an average of 97.4% to 100%, and from an average of 25.3% to 75% in grades 9-12 from 2021 to 2030 (FDRE, 2021). The commitment to education is believed to achieve the Government's Ten-Year Perspective Development Plan (2021 – 2030), which was revised under the principles of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to become the beacon of prosperity in Africa (FDRE, 2021). At the heart of this, it is believed that a living commitment to this would bring relentless and meaningful changes in the lives of the people of Ethiopia (FDRE, 2021).

In his recent speech broadcasted in October 2022 on national television, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed stressed the importance of indigenous education, stating that "our prosperity would not come from outside Ethiopia. Our knowledge would not come from outside Ethiopia. I urged you to use our blessings to prosper, and I begged you to work towards this end." This sentiment is reflected in the new educational and training policy (FMoE, 2023). However, despite the Government's commitment to promoting indigenous knowledge as part of development goals to transform societies by regenerating indigenous resources, far less has been explained about how this would be integrated into the existing schooling system, which is narrow in focus and lacks a sense of national direction (Kebede, 2020; Shelemay, 1992; Woldeyes, 2017).

This thesis, therefore, enquires into the questions of what indigenous education imply for children, headteachers (Yenetas), church scholars, schoolteachers, elderly people, and education policymakers; how children distinguish between and use modern and indigenous knowledge for their aspirations and futures; how children's aspirations and futures are connected to indigenous education; how do children harness indigenous education for their aspirations and future; and how do children make meaning to their future when their expectations are negotiated with parents, schools, and shifting educational policies. Admittedly, the answers to these questions might not provide complete explanations regarding how to fundamentally rethink modern schooling and reimagine children's futures through indigenous education in Ethiopia and beyond. They, however, will contribute insight into how indigenous education is useful for reimagining children's futures, which are dominantly conceptualized through modern schooling experiences and perspectives. To add to the scholarships that are currently happening in childhood studies, this thesis offers a nuanced account of how indigenous educational, and childhood intersect. It will take the dialogues on children's education and childhood forward.

The inaugural moment to reimagine the future of children in Ethiopia is to relearn indigenous knowledge, worldviews, and practices to the point of a resurgence of indigenous forms of theorizing children's lives. However, the concepts and theories that emerge out of indigenous forms of knowledge and worldviews have received little

attention in schooling system, which has hardly engaged in exploring them. As we will see in the chapter on concepts and theories, an emerging field of scholarship that draws attention to philosophies and theories of global¹ southern societies' attempts to challenge this domination of theories grounded in global Northern ethos. This thesis, therefore, applied social constructivism, decolonial theory, Sankofa theory, and relational theory—which are not mutually exclusive theoretical frameworks but explain indigenous realities differently. Social constructivism, decolonial theory, and Sankofa theory theories provide a framework to examine the marginality (and its consequences) of forms of indigenous knowledge in modern schooling in Ethiopia and identify ways to reimagine children's aspirations and futures in the country. This helps to unpack the Eurocentric distortion of indigenous education, particularly indigenous schooling in the Ethiopian Orthodox *Täwahädo*² Church (hereafter, EOTC), which has been studied as a case for this research. Relational theory is used to unravel how children's aspirations and futures are negotiated by parents, schools, and changing educational policies. Besides, it has been used to spotlight another way of reimagining children's aspirations and future through the unity of being, knowing, and doing of indigenous philosophies and Northern episteme.

Methodologically, this research relied on the critical realist approach to identify the socio-political conditions that had brought about a shift in the Ethiopian educational system. A participatory approach was employed to examine how the aspirations and futures of children are negotiated with parents, schools, and changing educational policies. To this end, three months of ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in Ethiopia using a cross-sectional qualitative research design and strategy. I will return to the details of this under the chapter on methodology, but in what follows, the research gap in the subject under study is explained.

The phrase "reimagining the future" as it appears in the title of this thesis means examining the growing future aspirations produced through schooling that, however, coexist with uncertainties and valorising the indigenous ways of understanding futurity for building a sense of meaningful life for children.

1.1 Problem Statement

Education is an essential component of any society's progress, including Ethiopia's. It comprises the various methods of acquiring knowledge and learning that can occur both in the formal and informal learning environments that children encounter in their daily lives (Ali et al., 2020). However, current formal learning in Ethiopia is 'inherently a western epistemological project' (Abebe & Biswas, 2021, p. 121), and has been criticized for marginalizing indigenous knowledge and local ways of knowing and for decentering 'indigenous epistemologies' (Woldegiorgis, 2020, p. 900). Schooling deprioritizes indigenous knowledge and indigenous practices and rights (Maithreyi et al., 2022), and devaluates informal spaces and practices of learning. It has been also criticised for

¹ In this study, the term 'Global North' (or West) is used to refer mainly to the regions of North America and Europe, while 'Global South' encompasses regions such as Africa, Asia, Latin America, and others. These concepts are also employed to examine identities and geopolitical power relations (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018). Therefore, they are beyond the geographical facts. They also indicate differences in influence within the knowledge economy (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018).

² It indicates the mystery of the perfect union of the divine with the human.

unachievable aspirations (Häberlein & Maurus, 2020) and thus it does not respond to the aspirations of children (Ansell et al., 2020).

It is noted (Hanson et al., 2018) that the future of children is uncertain as modern schooling has not delivered its promises to them through employment prospects. Similarly, studies by Young Lives in developing countries (Global South, in its current usage) revealed that despite some notable success of schooling in the lives of children, failures to achieve the aspirations of children has continued and is prevalent (see Boyden & James, 2014). Stated otherwise, children are between present unfulfilled promises and uncertain futures. A considerable corpus of recent studies (Ali et al., 2020; Assefa & Namaziandost, 2021; Demssie et al., 2020; Jirata, 2021) suggests that indigenous knowledge and ways of learning in education can rectify these challenges. Yet, despite demonstrating the need for integrating learning in the context of Ethiopia with indigenous education, how modern schooling is refocused locally receive little attention. That is to say, how indigenous worldviews, philosophies and practices are renewed to respond to the people's needs of progress. This thesis therefore aims to address this lacuna, unpacking how modern schooling can be rethought as indigenously relevant to children's aspirations. To this end, I explored the interface between indigenous education and the changing aspirations of children, and how they perceive their future prospects. I did so by drawing on the perspectives of children, parents, church scholars, schoolteachers, Yenetas (headteachers), elderly people, and educational policy makers in Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian Orthodox *Täwähädo* tradition, on which the current study focuses, Islamic education, and the Gada system of the Oromo are among the best known indigenous education systems in Ethiopia for millennia, and an alternative to the modern schooling tradition. Despite their importance to conceptualize children's aspirations and reimagine their future, they are ascribed a marginal position in modern schooling, which is rooted in Western thoughts. Indigenous education, as it has been used in this research, includes the worldviews, philosophies, spiritual heritages, and practices of the local people and their language, which shape their lives and allow them to pass on accumulated ways of knowing and doing in the making of the future that encourage civic engagement. By placing children's perceptions of the desired future in the context of indigenous education in the Ethiopian Orthodox *Täwähädo* Church, this research attempted to answer the research questions outlined in the section below.

1.2 Research Questions

This study addresses the question of how modern schooling is rethought indigenously in light of children's aspirations and futures. This is achieved through exploring the ways in which indigenous education can be responsive to children's current and future lives and prospects. To this end, the study addresses the following specific research questions:

1. What does indigenous education imply for children, parents, headteachers (yenetas), church scholars, schoolteachers, elderly people, and education policymakers?
2. Why do children value indigenous education in relation to their aspirations and futures?
3. How do children harness indigenous education for their aspirations and future?
4. How do children make sense of their futures where their aspirations are negotiated with parents, and the changing of educational polices?

The first two questions explore what indigenous education is for study participants and examine what they have perceived about the difference between indigenous and non-indigenous educations. They also allow identification of the distinctive traits of indigenous education and what it entails, and an understanding of children in terms of its use in their current and future lives. It also enables unravelling how it shapes and reshapes their experiences and aspirations. This helps explore the ways in which indigenous education is linked with the futures of children and how they harness it and schooling for their current lives and future prospects. The third question examines the extent to which indigenous education can be responsive to children's aspirations and futures in terms of addressing the unfulfilled promises of modern schooling. As their aspirations and futures are shaped by the expectations of their parents and also produced through socio-political and economic processes, it is important to examine how their future aspects of life are affected by policies.

1.3 Personal Motivation

My interest in the interface between education and children's futures is developed through lived experiences and academics. Born into a well-educated family, I started my educational journey in indigenous school (*Bet-Gubae, in Ge'ez*³) in the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tāwahədo* Church, which is one of the frameworks through which Ethiopian children's future can be understood. It is an educational system in which children and young people learn the Ethiopian liturgy, the hymn of Saint Yarde (the beginner of the world's melody), Qena (poetry through which they represent their worldviews about material and spiritual worlds), and others who shape and produce the rhythms of their present and future lives. My education in this school was interrupted when my parents sent me to Western school in primary education (Grade 1-4). However, I re-joined it while I was enrolled at Addis Ababa University (founded by Emperor Haile Selassie, who is seen as the pioneer of modern schooling in Ethiopia) in September 2003. It was through *Mahḅārā Qəddusan* (Association in the Name of the Saints), established in 1980s by students in higher education institution, that I had an opportunity to re-join the indigenous educational system and started to learn about differences in the contents and orientations of indigenous and modern schooling.

Indeed, it was during my five-year period of study and teaching courses in sociology at Addis Ababa University that I developed a strong interest in exploring why modern schooling does not speak to Ethiopian traditional philosophy, ways of thinking, and indigenous epistemologies and knowledge. Although I received a university-level degree, I felt half full and half empty. Doubtless, sociology is a foreign phenomenon and scholarly works by Ethiopians that problematize it through local forms of knowledge and worldviews is lacking. It did not take me long time to ask questions on, to mention a few, what is the significance of the field, why does indigenous perspectives receive little attention, why are local philosophies and knowledge heritages pushed to the margin, why are educated Ethiopian elites against a critical inquiry about the relevance of indigenous education, and why they are not successful in it. However, it was the MPhil in Childhood Studies program at Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Norway, where I had enrolled, that I found fertile ground in furthering these questions as I have learnt how international development policies and practices affect the lives of children and young people in the Global South. Ethiopia is included in this region. In addition, the

³ The oldest Ethiopic Semitic language.

sessions about theoretical, conceptual, methodological and ethical mistakes made when attempting to explain southern children by alien concepts and worldviews attracted my attention.

As an indigenous and modern school educated student who knows two worlds, I recognize the binary orientation in indigenous and modern schoolings. Given this, I wondered how Ethiopian modern schooling could explain children's and young people's lives through rationality, science, and technology without dropping indigenous Ethiopian philosophies, practices, spiritual treasures, and knowledge treasures. It was this broad question that forced me to explore the connection between indigenous education and children's desired future. Exploring how the unity of knowing and doing, removing contradictory binary approaches could be achieved between Indigenous and modern schooling to understand and explain Ethiopian childhoods and uphold children's rights and wellbeing is an aim for a PhD project in the future.

So long as indigenous and modern schoolings remain within their binary borders, all efforts to reimagine African childhood, for instance, could be affected by what one may call it epistemological disputes instead of being used to further progress in enhancing children's future prospects. My orientation to indigenous education and training in modern schooling positioned me to develop a lifelong interest in pluralistic schools of thoughts through which we could understand Ethiopian education and childhood.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study contributes in four interrelated ways. First, it adds to those studies that allege the weaknesses of Western epistemologies to understand African childhood and work to emancipate childhood studies from Eurocentric concepts and frameworks. It also adds to studies and public debates that question why Western education is available in Ethiopia, which did not submit to colonization in the way other African countries did (Woldeyes, 2017). Second, it could be read for interest in future studies on the interface between childhood and education. Thirdly, it implicitly attempts to make sense of childhood spiritually, which has received little attention in childhood scholarships. Fourth, it could be an input to the Ethiopian Ten-Year Development Plan (2021–30), which promotes reorienting educational policy to include indigenous knowledge and practices.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The first two chapters focus on the knowledge gaps on topic of interest and the Ethiopian context of the study. The first explains the justification for the purpose of the research, research questions, personal motivations, significance, and organization of the thesis. The second chapter examines the contents of indigenous education in Ethiopia, their traits, and the critics of Western educated Ethiopian elites (the 'reformists') on indigenous education. It also describes the roles and fallouts of modern schooling in Ethiopia and the social and political processes and conditions that shaped the need for rethinking it in the country. Chapter 3 maps out the concepts and theoretical frameworks employed. Chapter 4 present and discuss my methodological approach, including research design, the study site and participants recruitment, the positionality and reflexivity, my role, and ethical considerations. Chapters 5 and 6 contain the analysis and discussion of my empirical study. In the final section, I present the conclusions and

recommendations for policies, practices, and future research. Additionally, I will discuss the relevance and implications of my study for the research field of Childhood Studies.

Chapter 2: Background and Context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter starts by placing Ethiopia into an African context before sketching the history of modern schooling in the country. The second section deals with the curriculum of indigenous education, its sources and its values. The third section examines the political, social, and legal factors for the introduction of modern schooling in Ethiopia. It also provides accounts of its roles and drawbacks. In this context, the fourth section examines three major interrelated contemporary political, policy, and social circumstances that shape the current study.

2.2 Placing Ethiopia into an African Context and Laying the Groundwork

Ethiopia, also known as Abyssinia, is the oldest country in the world, located in the Horn of Africa (named after the horn-shaped top the continent) (Adejumobi, 2007). It shares borders with Sudan in the West, Somalia in the East, Eritrea in the North, and Kenya in the South. Ethiopian is the home for a mosaic of multiple languages (Cushitic, Omotic, Semitic and Nilo-Saharan) speaking people (Ado et al., 2021). According to 2007-2037 Population Projections for Ethiopia, children in the age group of 0-19 years accounted almost half (48%) of the total population in July 2022 (CSA, 2013). More than half of the population are Orthodox Christian, followed by Muslim, Protestant, and Catholic (FMH, 2021).

There are at least two important factors that make Ethiopia as a distinct phenomenon in Africa. Firstly, it is the independent nation as it defeated the colonial Italy in 1896 at Adwa (Milkias & Getachew, 2005). This historic moment prizes it as the hallmark of independence for African nations (decolonized in the 1960s) and the black people who were under the hegemonic regimes of European powers (Milkias & Getachew, 2005). In this way, it remains the epitome of counterhegemonic narratives in colonization discourses (Kebede, 2004) in the global context although it receives little attention in decolonial scholarships. Secondly, it has the oldest Orthodox Christian Church in Africa before Western missionaries and colonialism (Adejumobi, 2007). Ethiopia's living cultures, oral traditions, and written records have been highly shaped by this indigenous Ethiopian Orthodox *Täwahedo* Church, which is different from other Christendom in the world in terms of biblical canon, religious practices, and educations (Adejumobi, 2007). Although it has been ascribed marginal status in academic scholarships for the exploration of the nation's children's future prospects by locating them in this indigenous institution, indigenous education has existed for a long time in Ethiopia.

2.3 Ethiopian Indigenous Education

Before unpacking the reasons why Western education was introduced in Ethiopia and the need for rethinking it in a way that indigenous education is revived, I will describe the contents of indigenous education, its sources, and its values. In what follows, I address each of these issues.

2.3.1 What does the Indigenous Education Constitute?

The question of what indigenous knowledge constitutes is a matter of debate in academic and policy spheres (Breidlid, 2009; Seehawer & Breidlid, 2021). Some found that the African indigenous knowledge system includes material and religious aspects of life, which Western worldviews are missing (Breidlid, 2009; Seehawer & Breidlid, 2021). This distinction does not mean that Western thinking does not learn from spiritual heritage (Kebede, 2004). Rather, it exclusively relies on the secular worldview, which partially explains the non-Western worldviews and practices that transcends scientific criteria (Breidlid, 2009; Seehawer & Breidlid, 2021). This means that it centres Southern societies into the Western orbits (Kebede, 2004). Being secular “prevents any possible relapse into traditional religious dogmatism”(Girma, 2014, p. 85). With this in mind, I describe briefly the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tāwahaḍo* Church and present its educational system, including the curriculum, contents, and institutional structure below.

It is the view of many that the history of Ethiopia cannot not be understood without examining its connection with Christianity. The first written reference to the emergence of Christianity in Ethiopia is in the New Testament, particularly in the Acts of the Apostles (Chapter 8, Verse 26-38), which affirm that the Ethiopian Enoch, who was the servant of Queen Candace of Ethiopia, was baptized by Philip the Evangelist while he went to Jerusalem to worship God in the 1st century AD (Engedayehu, 2013). It became the state religion around the 4th century A.D., during the rule of the then-existing King Ezana of Aksum (320–356 A.D.) (320–356 A.D.) (Engedayehu, 2013; Woldegiorgis, 2020). Yet, the history of religion in Ethiopia was not developed here but stretches back, as there is reference to it in the Old Testament. This issue lies at the heart of the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tāwahaḍo Church's* history. It is one of the Oriental Orthodox Churches that are oriented to Miaphysite Christology, which holds the absolute union of Divinity and Humanity in Jesus Christ without change, separation, confusion, mixture, or division (Engedayehu, 2013). Given this doctrinal orientation, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church named itself as 'Tāwahaḍo Church', a Ge'ez term which conveying the aforementioned nature of Jesus Christ. Beyond sharing this dogmatic content with other Oriental Churches, for instance the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch, the Armenian Apostolic Church, and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tāwahaḍo* Church have historic ties with them in terms of cultural and social traditions (Engedayehu, 2013). However, its practices make it different from them, one of which is its indigenous system of education.

The educational system of the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tāwahaḍo* Church is “one of the oldest systems of learning in the world” (Pankhurst, 1990, p. xi) since 330 AD (Ephrem, 2013). However, it took its present form in 13th and 16th centuries, which were the ‘golden age’ for scholarly literature of the Church (Dagne, 1971). More generally, the indigenous educational curriculum includes four different successive levels, which can be correspond

to primary to university level education of modern schooling, through which a student move from knowledge of reading and writing to the highest level of interpretation of sacred books and knowledge creation. In the first level, the students learn reading and writing of the Scriptures in Ge'ez, "the original language of the Church ritual" and elementary arithmetic (Pankhurst, 1955, p. 234, as cited in Kebede, 2020, p. 6) in *Nebab-Bet* (School of reading). The second level is a stage where advanced studies start (Kebede, 2020; Shelemay, 1992; Woldeyes, 2017). In this level students study musical composition such as the Ethiopian liturgy in *Qedassie-Bet* (School of liturgy) which is the training of altar priests and deacons, *Miraf*, *Somä daggwa* and *Daggwa* which are books with hymns and troparies written by Saint Yared, the eminent church scholar created world melody in the 537 A.D. (Abraha, 2009; Woldeyes, 2017), in *Zema-Bet* (School of hymn or music) (Milkias, 1976). After this, they can study *Zemare* (Eucharist Songs) and *Mewaset* (Songs for the deceased) and chanting in *Aquaquam-Bet* (school of swaying and chanting) (Milkias, 1976). The school is "rich in content, revealing a deep knowledge of the Bible, of Ethiopian history, and of the stories and legends that gathered over the centuries around the great personalities and events of religious and national tradition"(Pankhurst, 1955, p. 245, as cited in Kebede, 2020, p. 7). The third level is *Qene-Bet* (School of poetry) which constitutes "church music, the composition of poetry . . . theology and history, painting . . . manuscript writing" (Pankhurst, 1955, p. 237, as cited in Kebede, 2020, p.6). There are also readings of the philosophical accounts written in "*Metsahafe-Falasma Tabiban* (Book of Wise Philosophers), with passages from Plato, Aristotle, Diogenes, Cicero, etc." (Milkias, 1976, p. 81). It is the stage where the knowledge production about spiritual, political, economic, and social lives of the people surfaced from the sacred books and the living culture of the people (Dagne, 1971).

The fourth level is called *Metsahaft-Bet* (school of books), which is the top of all schools which include four sub-specialization such as *Biluy Kidan* (studies of Old Testament books), *Haddis Kidan* (studies of New Testament), *Metsahaft-Liqawunit* (studies of scriptures of the Church fathers) and *Metsahaft-Menekosat* (studies of monasticism) (Dagne, 1971; Kebede, 2020; Woldeyes, 2017). The scholar who completed these four sub-fields was named '*arat ayina*', "Four Eyed" (Wagaw, 1990; Woldeyes, 2017). This school also consists of the studies of codes of laws in *Fetha-Negest* (laws of the Kings) and of Ethiopian history in *Kibre-Negast* (Glory of the Kings), *Tarike-Negest* (monarchic history) (Kebede, 2020; Milkias, 1976; Wagaw, 1990; Woldeyes, 2017).

Along with describing the structure of indigenous education, it is equally important to identify its sources and the values it has brought to the country. As we will see, therefore, in the next section, I will identify these sources and the contributions this educational system makes.

2.3.2 The Sources and Values

Although it remained outside the mainstream educational system, which is critiqued for its Western bias, since the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie I (Kebede, 2020; Woldeyes, 2017), indigenous Ethiopian education has continued as part of the knowledge that has been generated in Ethiopia since 330 A.D. (Ephrem, 2013). There are different sources for this education. To mention a few: spiritual heritages, ancestral wisdom, historical events, generational oral transmissions, storytelling, aspects of human interaction with nature, the observations ways of knowing and the experiences people go through in life (Kebede, 2020; Milkias, 1976; Wagaw, 1990; Woldeyes, 2017). This educational system is also notable for its distinctive source in revelation that knowledge acquires with God

(Woldeyes, 2017). Imported books "impregnated with native contents" (Kebede, 2020, p. 6) are also resources, which means indigenous scholars have been translating and incorporating knowledge obtained from these books into Ethiopian realities and advancing them without reducing their knowledge or disciplinary contents (Kebede, 2020; Wagaw, 1990; Woldeyes, 2017).

Not only did the indigenous educational system deal with religious things, but the way people govern and understand justice were also discussed. For instance, *Fetha-Negest* (Laws of the Kings or Justice of Kings), which was developed out of the ancestral wisdom, and the canonical books of the Apostles and their laws and impregnated with "an Ethiopian flavor" had been used to handle justice related matters (Budge, 1928, p. 568, as cited in Woldeyes, 2017, p.79). However, it was discarded from use when Emperor Haile Selassie introduced a constitution (*Ser'ata Mengest*) in 1931 (Bairu & Heinrich, 1976), which had been adopted from the German Imperial Constitution (1871) and Japanese Meiji Constitution (1889) (Bairu & Heinrich, 1976). The revised versions of the 1955 constitution (*Ser'ata Mengest*) was also much more influenced by the Anglo-American (Bairu & Heinrich, 1976). Unsurprisingly, the 1974 constitution was also far more influenced by the foreign orientation (Bairu & Heinrich, 1976). It is argued that "the impregnation of students with the spirit of *Kibre Negast* enabled them to see the world from the viewpoint of Ethiopia" (Kebede, 2020, p. 7), which comprehensively evaluates both the religious and secular foundation of the country. It addresses aspects of human interactions that embodies the lived experiences of the people and their interactions with each other and the state (Woldeyes, 2017).

Given its religious roots, indigenous education laid the secular foundation of the nation. This means that, the "church education also produced civil servants . . . such as judges, governors, scribes, treasurers, and general administrators" (Wagaw, 1979, as cited in Kebede, 2020, p. 7). According to Kebede, "this extension to the secular society was a natural consequence of the basic and all-embracing cultural function of religion in Ethiopia" (Kebede, 2020, p. 7). Providing flavour to his argument, Kebede cited the view of the notable Ethiopian novelist Addis Alemayehu, who also worked as Foreign Minister of Ethiopia, who argues that church education is "a powerful means to unite the spiritual existence with the secular mode of life" (Alemayehu, 1956b, p. 107, as cited in Kebede, 2020, p. 7). In providing the flavor to his argument, Kebede cited the view of the notable Ethiopian novelist Addis Alemayehu, who also worked as Foreign Minister of Ethiopia, who argues that church education "a powerful means to unite the spiritual existence with the secular mode of life" (Alemayehu, 1956b, p. 107, as cited in Kebede, 2020, p. 7).

Despite these roles it played for the nation, the indigenous education system has been displaced to the margins from its privileged position in the lives of the people. This happened mainly during the imperial regimes when the so-called reformist Ethiopian intellectuals were inspired to catch up with the modernization of Europe through modern schooling , which was viewed as "a shortcut to development" (Kebede, 2020, p. 9). In what follows, I examine the critics of these reformists and how their objections shifted the course of education in Ethiopia. To do this, I will first describe the theoretical roots and socio-political factors behind why modern schooling emerged in Ethiopia.

2.4 Modern Schooling in Ethiopia

2.4.1 Structure of Schooling System

The schooling system in Ethiopia comprises pre-primary, primary, and secondary schools. Pre-primary education includes three types: Kindergarten (3 years), which is mainly run by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), communities, private institutions, and faith-based organizations; Child to Child (1 year), in which older children play with younger siblings or other children in the neighbourhood under the supervision of teachers; and 'O' Class (1 year), which begins at the age of 6. Nationally, 36.7% of children are enrolled in pre-primary classes. The Pre-primary Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) was 37.7% for boys and 35.6% for girls (FMoE, 2021b).

Primary education in Ethiopia comprises primary school (Grades 1-6) and middle school (Grades 7-8), with the official age range for these schools being 7 to 14 years old (FMoE, 2021b). Nationally, the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for primary education (Grades 1-6) is 102.6%, and for middle school (Grades 7-8), it was 70.0% (FMoE, 2021b). Across genders, the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for Grades 1-8 was 95.1% (99.7% for boys and 90.6% for girls) (FMoE, 2021b). This indicates that many students are not transitioning from primary to middle school, either due to repeating grades or dropping out (FMoE, 2021b).

Secondary education in Ethiopia covers Grade 9 to 12, with the official age range being 15 to 18 years old. Students take a national exam, the Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate Examination, at the end of Grade 12, which certifies completion of secondary general education and determines eligibility for university-level education (FMoE, 2023). The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of secondary education (Grades 9-12) for this year is 42.1%, indicating a low transition from primary and middle to secondary education (FMoE, 2021b). The GER for Grades 9-12 is 43.8% for boys and 40.3% for girls (FMoE, 2021b).

2.4.2 Socio-Political and Intellectual Roots

The seed for the introduction of Western education in Ethiopia was planted in the first half of the sixteenth century with the arrival of European missionaries (Adejumobi, 2007). They had used the relations between Aksumite rule and the Portuguese, who allied against the Muslim invasion declared against Ethiopians by Ahmad Ibn Ghazi (1506–43), known also by the name Ahmad Gragh ("Ahmed the left-handed"), as an opportunity to enter and introduce their religion (Adejumobi, 2007). The Catholics (the Capuchins and Lazarists) were influential and had proclaimed Rome as pre-eminent while denouncing the indigenous faiths and traditions (Adejumobi, 2007; Dagne, 2007; Bahru Zewde, 2002). This led them to be banished from the country during Emperor Fasiladas (1632–1667) (Adejumobi, 2007). However, Emperor Menelik II (1889–1913) lifted this ban and allowed the missionaries, including Swedish evangelists, to his interest of promoting education in Ethiopia (Dagne, 2007; Bahru Zewde, 2002).

The confidence Emperor Menelik II developed after his triumphed over the Italian invasion at Adwa in 1896 occurred as the most important factor in the rise of his interest to expand knowledge of Europe (Dagne, 2007). In his words, Menelik, as mentioned in the letter he sent to the German Kaiser (*Emperor*) Wilhelm II, declared this interest saying "...today, the European power have...become neighbours of Ethiopia in all

directions. The way is open for knowledge and commerce. Our country has begun to receive guests who come from abroad” (Bairu, 1981, p. 14, as cited in Dagne 2007, p. 308). Accordingly, at the eve of the brink of his reign, he substituted court education by the modern schooling and “declaring education a function of the state” and mission schools had reworked and handcraft work was established (Dagne, 2007, p. 309). It was at the beginning of the twentieth century that he introduced modern schooling emulated from the European countries and proclaimed that parents should send their children to school at the age of six years (Dagne, 2007; Pankhurst, 1946). Accordingly, Emperor Menelik II opened the first school called Menelik II School in Addis Ababa (the capital) in 1908 and allowed many students to study in Europe (Pankhurst, 1972). Although he showed interest in following the Western model of education for his country in the early period of his reign with his modernization project, Emperor Menelik could not surface it. Yet, this laid a basis for the emergence of modern schooling and further development of education in Ethiopia (Pankhurst, 1972; Bahru Zewde, 2002). However, it remained unsuccessful to fulfil the political, religious, and cultural requirements of the local people (Bahru Zewde, 2002).

Modernizing Ethiopia project through modern schooling started by Emperor Menelik II also continued during the era of Emperor Haile Selassie I (1930–1974), who was the last emperor to rule Ethiopia (Adejumobi, 2007; Bahru Zewde, 2002). His desire for rapid modernization drove him to implement educational reform (Bahru Zewde, 2002). The state-led investment in education and scholarship in foreign universities, primarily in America and Europe, was the primary focus of this reform (Adejumobi, 2007; Bahru Zewde, 2002). The current structure of the educational system under the authority of the ministry was also the outcome of his reform in 1930 (Adejumobi, 2007). He opened the Empress Menen School in 1931 and many more primary schools in different provinces of the country, such as Dessie, Gore, Jigjiga, Nekemti, Harar, Asba Tafari, Jimma, Gondar, Debra Markos, Adwa, Mekelle, and Selale in 1935 (Adejumobi, 2007; Bahru Zewde, 2002).

It was during Emperor Haile Selassie's regime that the historic higher education institution, Haile Selassie I University (now Addis Ababa University), was established in Ethiopia in 1950 (Bahru Zewde, 2002). In the inaugural program of the University, the Emperor said that:

A fundamental objective of the University must be the safeguarding and the developing of the culture of the people which it serves. This University is a product of that culture; it is the grouping together of those capable of understanding and using the accumulated heritage of the Ethiopian people. In this University men and women will, working in association with one another, study the well-springs of our culture, trace its development, and mould its future (Balsvik, 1979, pp. 6-7, as cited in Kebede, 2020, p.15).

Despite the fact that Emperor Haile Selassie advocated and addressed in his speech to students and officials that education should not be externally oriented but should solve Ethiopian problems based on their knowledge heritages and experiences, the university continued to produce elites through a Western-style schooling system (Bekele & Verharen, 2013). As a result, this university's education lacked a solid indigenous foundation on which to build the modern schooling (Bekele & Verharen, 2013). Surprisingly, it excluded indigenous education and became influenced by foreign teachers who were oriented to Catholic and Protestant faiths, despite the facts that Orthodox Christianity was the country's official religion and that indigenous education was

prevalent in the country (Kebede, 2020). One could say that this created a challenge to keeping indigenous education alive in the newly adopted educational policy.

In addition, even though the Ethiopian reformist scholars who were educated in the United States and Europe worked closely with the Emperors' aspirations to modernize (*zemenawi madereg*), the nation (Salvadore, 2007) adopted a Eurocentric model; they argued that what was needed for the advancement of the nation was to move from traditionalism to a focus on the European model of education (Kebede, 2006). Some of them, by ignoring its non-substitutable roles, blamed Ethiopia's failure on the Orthodox Church and its indigenous education (Kebede, 2006). They implicitly developed a sense of bias while evaluating the conditions of the country through a European model (Kebede, 2020; Woldeyes, 2017) rather than through the eyes of indigenous experiences and contexts (Bekele & Verharen, 2013; Kebede, 2006, 2012). This means that, "the formation of an educated elite entirely opposed to the characteristics of the indigenous elite became the major goal of the new system" (Kebede, 2020, p. 9). This continued during the regime of Derg (1974–1991), which was a military junta that replaced royal rule and declared Ethiopia a socialist state based on Marxist-Leninist ideology in 1974 (Bishaw & Lasser, 2012). In this regime, the educational system also came under the influence of Eastern European countries (e.g., East Germany, Bulgaria, and Hungary) and socialist principles, which continued to marginalize indigenous knowledge heritages (Bishaw & Lasser, 2012). This could indicate the educational policy's deficiencies of having consistent philosophy oriented to the indigenous contents.

Despite this, in order to unpack the fallouts of modern schooling and suggest alternative pathways to address them, it is equally important to examine the role of modern schooling in Ethiopia. The following section unravels this fact.

2.4.3 Functions of Modern Schooling

Undoubtedly, the foreign-educated reformist Ethiopians, although many of them were far less interested in the potential of local knowledge, served as the diplomatic agents between Ethiopia and the West (Bahru Zewde, 2002). They worked as the diplomatic delegates to the country. This group also includes intellectuals who added 'a modern veneer' to the indigenous education of the country (Bahru Zewde, 2002).

Since its inception in the first half of the twentieth century in Ethiopia, the spread of Western-style education has facilitated the diffusion of modern technologies and lifestyles. It paves the way for obtaining ethical goods (e.g., healthcare) and literacy that alter the low productivity both in rural and urban areas. The material improvements and economic changes are recorded through modern sciences but equally widens the social gaps among different groups of people (Adejumobi, 2007). In addition, "it permits the articulation of the aspirations of the masses as a subject fit for knowledge" (Milkias, 1976, p. 79). Through its system of investigation, it also allows for alternative ways of examining the well-being and rights of the people and their system of administration.

Although it plays the aforementioned roles, which are not an exhaustive list, modern schooling has drawbacks. In the following section, I will explain them.

2.4.4 Fallouts of Modern Schooling: Discontinuity of Epistemes

The most important characteristic of the entire set-up of modern schooling in Ethiopia was that it was imposed from the UK, the USA, and influenced by various other European countries and thus essentially constructed to serve a different society than the Ethiopian one. . . . Curricula as well as textbooks came from abroad. There was little in the curricula related to basic and immediate needs of the Ethiopian society. To the average child the school was essentially an alien institution of which his own parents were entirely ignorant (Balsvik, 1979, p. 6, as cited in Kebede, 2020, p. 12).

One can capture from the above quote that the modern schooling system in Ethiopia is externally oriented and by extension is not in touch with Ethiopian realities. It is noted that children and young people have developed a sense of uprootedness from their social realities and national legacy (Milkias, 2006). That means, the education system produced "a rootless intelligentsia" in the country (Kebede, 2020, p. 25). Instilled with the Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, students chose to campaign "for a clear break with the country's history and tradition" in their opposition to the monarchy (Negash, 1990, p. 8). This was accompanied by the replacement of indigenous elites with Western-educated intellectuals to serve the state (Kebede, 2003). This, however, reproduced inequalities between them. This occurred because there was a general belief that what has proved useful to foreign countries would be applicable to the development ends of the nation.

The liberal values that the system introduced and the injection of the alien style of life which condemn the cultural autonomy without which a sense of life could not be realized detrimentally influence the lived experiences and indigenous ways of doing (Asres, 1958; Bekele & Verharen, 2013; Kebede, 2008, 2012; Milkias, 2006). It is argued that "to change intellectuals into turncoats, Western education had first to denationalize their mind by encouraging individualism and social ambition" (Asres, 1958, p. 82). It is also accused of its detrimental influence on the continuity of the indigenous ways of knowing and doing, condemning them as signs of backwardness (Asres, 1958; Bekele & Verharen, 2013; Kebede, 2012; Negash, 1990).

With these problems inherent in the modern schooling system, it is believed by many that it is the saviour of the country from all crises. Yet, this issue needs to be reassessed in the context of contemporary global and national milieus. As we will see, the section below therefore unpacks the current socio-political situations undergoing and the factors influencing the reimagining of the future of education in Ethiopia.

2.5 On-Going Socio-Political Ecologies and the Future of Education in Ethiopia

This thesis is situated in three interrelated policy, intellectual, and socio-political contexts, each of which will be discussed below.

2.5.1 'Quality Education' Agenda through Indigenous Lens

The Ethiopian government has worked to achieve 'quality education' through modern schooling, one of the goals of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. Here, what quality means and how it is translated in various contexts remains a point of theoretical and epistemological debate in education (Breidlid & Krøvel, 2020; Seehawer & Breidlid, 2021). But a starting point for agreement among all educational stakeholders, including children and young people, is understanding the imperatives of quality education (Breidlid & Krøvel, 2020). In target 4.7, this goal mentions the need for knowledge and competencies for boys and girls in a globally changing and increasingly interdependent

world (Breidlid & Krøvel, 2020). Very telling here is that children and young people in Sub-Saharan Africa, where Ethiopia is found, are required to acquire global knowledge that enables them to compete on the international stage, where unequal social and political influences operate (Seehawer & Breidlid, 2021).

However, according to recent studies (Breidlid & Krøvel, 2020; Demssie et al., 2020; Seehawer & Breidlid, 2021), the epistemic relevance of indigenous education is missing in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing and doing to make them responsive to the present and future lives of children and young people (Demssie et al., 2020; Jirata, 2021; Ansell et al., 2020) for sustainable living (UNESCO, 2021) are not included. Within this general orientation, the rationale of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is objected to for its reliance on values and epistemologies defined as Western (Breidlid & Krøvel, 2020). Thus, it is argued that "quality education needs to be responsive to students' epistemically diverse life realities" (Seehawer & Breidlid, 2021, p. 1).

2.5.2 Ethiopian Education Development Roadmap (2018-30): a Bright Future?

The new Ethiopian Educational Road Map (2018–30), enacted in September 2020, clearly defines education as a means of producing children and young people for future lives (FMoE, 2021a). While it acknowledges the relevance of indigenous education, the new educational roadmap has experienced some problems. The first of these, it does not have a philosophy built on the history and traditions of the country. Even though it seeks to address the problems of previous educational policies internally rather than relying on foreign sources, the road map is influenced by the experiences of Germany, Switzerland, Singapore, Australia, South Korea, China, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Vietnam (FMoE, 2021a). By extension, one may say that it often seemed little more than a reproduction of Western and Asian realities with little emphasis on its own context. Such a view leads me to attune to the need for rethinking it through indigenous lenses. In addition, although it advocates the fashioning of the policy with indigenous knowledge and values, the indigenous educational systems (e.g., the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tāwahādo* Church and Islamic Schools) were not consulted, and indigenous elites were not involved in the process. Last, but not least, is that it ends the quality of education with the meeting of global standards. Institutions in the country have designed academic curricula aligned with sustainable development, while the UN Sustainable Development Goal on 'quality education' fails to recognize indigenous knowledge as an alternative way for desired developments and the future of children and the country at large (Demssie et al., 2020; Jirata, 2021; UNESCO, 2021).

2.5.3 'Epistemic Violence' and Indigenous Movement in Ethiopia

Nothing could better explain epistemic violence than the dislocation of history and tradition in modern schooling in Ethiopia and the planting of alien ideologies (Woldeyes, 2017). Spivak defines epistemic violence as "the construction of a self-immolating colonial subject for the glorification of the social mission of the colonizer" (Spivak, 1999, p. 127, as cited in Woldeyes, 2017, p. 11). Although they had sentiments toward their country, the Western-educated reformist Ethiopian elites repudiated such sentiments when they sidelined indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing in their knowledge production (Woldeyes, 2017). They had dislocated their conception of modernity and writings on the country's history, politics, religion, and traditions from indigenous

epistemologies (Woldeyes, 2017). Since then, the lack of reference to Ethiopian epistemic sources for social and economic policies has continued to be a challenge for the country. It is here that the Moa *Tāwahaḍo* against this epistemic violence enters.

Moa *Tāwahaḍo* is a socio-religious movement, supported by the Holy Synod of Ethiopian Orthodox *Tāwahaḍo* Church, that is gaining momentum nowadays in Ethiopia as it increasingly resists the ways in which Ethiopian Orthodox *Tāwahaḍo* Church and Indigenous spiritual heritages and wisdom are portrayed in political parties' manifestos, media policies, and modern curricula, among other things (Kidusan, 2022, 20 March; Media, 2022, 9 February). The movement is inspired by the argument that the church has been weakened by the growing systematic and ideological attack of the "secular state," which puts the blame on Ethiopia's lag. A more specific historical factor is the 1975 Manifesto of the regime that ruled the country for 17 years, which overtly stated the need for demobilizing the Orthodox religion (Kidusan, 2022, 20 March; Media, 2022, 9 February). Related to this, another factor is the continuation of uncritical narratives by modernist non-orthodox elites who allege the Church and the indigenous educational system are reluctant to modernity (Kidusan, 2022, 20 March; Media, 2022, 9 February) (which is problematic and a Western bias concept). By extension, this reveals that the traditions and indigenous epistemes, which were powerful in protecting generations from uprooting and a sense of fullness in life (Kebede, 2020; Media, 2022, 9 February; Woldeyes, 2017), were weakened when they were discarded in new educational policies in the country. This has inspired this thesis to explore how the aspirations and futures of children are negotiated by changing educational policies.

2.6 Summary

This chapter opened with a discussion of the distinct traits of Ethiopia in African as it was not ruled under the colonial powers. The Ethiopian Orthodox *Tāwahaḍo* Church, which is one of the indigenous religious creeds through which Ethiopia could be explained, makes the nation a unique phenomenon. In this context, it describes the contents of indigenous education which built on the spiritual heritages, ancestral wisdom, historical events, generational oral transmissions, among others. It deals with the introduction of modern schooling during the reign of Emperor Menelik II, who welcomed Western education as inspiration for modernization. Emperor Haile Selassie expanded this by introducing reforms on the educational system, which was influenced by Western experiences. This, however, dislocated the indigenous epistemes when the indigenous education was sidelined by the new policy and the perspectives of indigenous elites are now often excluded. The chapter closed with a review of the "quality education" agenda in the SDGs of 2030 and the value of applying an indigenous perspective to it. It presents the new Ethiopian educational roadmap and its focus on indigenous knowledge but remains externally oriented to the experiences of foreign countries. It also discussed the revival of the indigenous movement against the continued epistemic violence against the religion, history, and traditions of the country.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Perspectives

3.1 Introduction

This chapter opens with the discussion of aspirations and futurity from the constructivist perspective. Next, it explains the other theoretical perspectives, which are important to understand the indigenous conception of childhood aspirations and problematize the singular childhood model.

3.2 Social Constructionism Theory

Before making the case for the social constructionism of children's aspirations and futures, it is important to examine the main arguments of social constructionism theory of childhood. Social constructionism theory of childhood posits that childhood is not a biological stage of development that all individuals experience in the same way, but rather a social construct that is shaped by cultural and historical contexts (Prout & James, 1997). Different cultures and societies have different notions of what it means to be a child, and these notions change over time (Phoenix & Pattman, 2000). Childhood is not a neutral stage of life but is instead a site of power relations. Adults have power over children, and the social construction of childhood reflects and reinforces these power relations (Corsaro, 2011; Phoenix & Pattman, 2000). It is based on the premise that children are not passive recipients of socialization, but active agents who participate in the construction of their own childhood (Prout & James, 1997). They actively create their own social worlds, and their experiences and perspectives contribute to the social construction of childhood (Corsaro, 2011; Phoenix & Pattman, 2000; Prout & James, 1990). This has implications for their explanation of life and vision for the future.

3.2.1 Constructionism and Aspirations

A growing body of research examines children's and young people's aspirations. These studies, inspired by the human capital approach to education, relate aspirations to individual differences in preferences, desires, capacities, and choices in the labour market that are relevant to their future (Bernard & Taffesse, 2012; Bernard & Taffesse, 2014; Bertrand et al., 2004; Dalton et al., 2016) relate aspiration to individual differences in preferences, desires, capacities, and choices in the labour market relevant to their future. However, they only focus on an individual level and limit aspirations for economic domains and measurable outcomes. In contrast to this, Appadurai argues that "aspirations are never simply individual" but "always formed in interaction and the thick of social life" (2004, p. 67). The constructionism theory affords prime focus to the local contexts, cultural expressions, and social expectations that shape aspirations (Froerer et al., 2022).

Similarly, studies revealed that aspirations are historically, socially, and geographically situated (DeJaeghere, 2016; Froerer et al., 2022; Huijsmans et al., 2021). More specifically, this may tell us that aspirations are produced through history, traditions, local worldviews, practices, and philosophies. This inspires me to further question how the discontinuity of indigenous epistemes, as discussed elsewhere in this thesis, which

occurred when modern schooling was introduced in Ethiopia, undermined its use-value and shifted the types of aspirations children in school and life-worlds.

Interestingly, Zipin and his colleagues define schooled-world as "institutional confines that can limit knowledge-permeation from fuller social-life spaces" (Zipin et al., 2020, p. 153) and the life-world (the world of everyday life) as constituting historically grounded and culturally accumulated resources transferred from past generations (Zipin et al., 2020, p. 152). They argue that these two spaces have dialectical relations as the knowledge orientation of the two varies. By the same token, one may wonder whether the schooled-world where modern formal education operates can form a "fuller" aspiration of children without embodying their indigenous practices, worldviews, spiritual heritages and practices, traditions, and history. Therefore, the school world partially explains the contents of children's aspirations. It only "provides children with a space in which they can identify with the parameters of modern childhood" (Nieuwenhuys, 1996, p. 244).

3.2.2 Constructionism and Futurity

There is an unresolved debate in childhood scholarship pertaining to the question of futurity and whether children are 'human beings' or 'human becomings'. Although the new social studies (childhood studies, in its current usage) hold the view that children are 'human beings' (present) rather than 'human becomings' (future), recent studies in the field (Abebe, 2022; Ansell, 2017; Hanson, 2017; Spyrou, 2020) showed that children can best be understood through/within the three-dimension of time (present, past, and future). They have modified a dualist position (present-being versus future-becoming) and then suggested the point where the three: past, present, and future intersected/interacted to explore children's lives in relation to their future prospects (Uprichard, 2008). Indeed, since they are living in a state of continuous changes and processes, children, like adults, can create a world in which they accomplish their desired future (Abebe, 2022; Spyrou, 2020). However, as their presence is the source of their future, focusing on how their future prospects are found in what they are doing and produced through societal processes and social relationships is important (Abebe, 2022). In this way, futurity may be conceptualized as non-empty but is what children experience and aspire to achieve based on their present lives.

Citing the works of Appadurai (2004), DeJaeghere notes that "a capacity to aspire is embedded in cultural logics about the future" (DeJaeghere, 2016, p. 239). By extension, Zipin and his colleagues argue that "working upon inherited knowledge resources, extends the vector of lived time: from past-in-present, to present-into-future" (Zipin et al., 2020, p. 152). This means that children's present lives could be understood as their accomplished future. However, it is worth noting that conception of the future varies across societies. Accordingly, there may not be a universal forward-looking that children would commonly project. Rather, there could be futures that embody the interplay of multiple types of aspirations shaped by both modern schooling (school-world) and indigenous education (life-world). In this case, indigenous knowledge might also be used to retrieve the past to identify the aspirations of children and envision their futures. This form of temporality in the discourse of children's aspirations may be an important addition to examining their vision of the future across time.

3.3 Decolonial Theory

To be fair, the decolonial theory is not a theory of children's aspirations and future and theorists were not initially devoted to explaining children's aspirations and future. But it has received considerable attention in childhood scholarship (see de Castro, 2020a; Hanson et al., 2018; P´erez et al., 2017; Shihadem, 2017).

By the mid-20th century, precisely when most of the world was decolonized, a new theoretical perspective, namely postcoloniality, emerged to challenge practices and institutions that established the hegemonic power structure during colonialism in a neoliberal global system (Abebe et al., 2022; Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018). Stated otherwise, postcolonial theory "considers seriously the continuing impact of colonialism on the social, cultural, and economic development of both colonial powers and the colonies"(Ray, 2013, p. 148, as cited in Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018, p. 700). In a similar vein, when he allude the goal of postcolonial theory, Julian Go (2013) explains it as "a loosely coherent body of thought and writing that critiques and aims to transcend the structures supportive of Western colonialism and its legacies" (Go, 2013, p. 29). This creates a critical dialogue on the socio-political and economic arrangements between the North and the South and how this organize the world after middle of the 20th century(Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018). Such view originally appears in the works of scholars like Frantz Fanon (1952), Edward Said ([1978] 2003), Homi Bhabha (1994), and Gayatri Spivak (1999)(Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018).

One of the forms by which the legacies of colonialism stay intact in the postcolonial world is modern schooling (Go, 2013; Ray, 2013; Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018). Postcolonial theorists argue that it is informed by European and North American ideas and values and backed with the binary racial distinction of the world in to Western and non-Western categories and policing it as such (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018). In order to overcome this, they suggested decoloniality which describes how the hegemonic Western knowledge shapes the world and reiterates and reclaims indigenous epistemic justice (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018).

3.3.1 Decoloniality in Lieu of Universality

Decolonial scholarship has emerged as an alternative epistemological understanding and method of critiquing the ways of theorization which have taken the modernity experiences, which racializes 'Others', and scientific traditions of the West as the universal system of the world(Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018). It argues that modernity in a neoliberal global system restricts, displaces and silences an array of indigenous forms of traditions, history, spiritual and knowledge heritages (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018). As a result, postcolonial theorists suggests decoloniality in lieu of universality as the important method to restore, rediscover, and relearn the multiplicity of knowledge spheres that compose traditions and history of indigenous people found both in Western and non-Western societies (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018).

In her article *Decolonizing a higher education system which has never been colonized* (2021), Emnet Tadesse argues that decoloniality is not necessarily understood by tying it to the formal colonization experience but also with forms of epistemic coloniality of non-colonized societies such as Ethiopia. She explicitly puts it that the epistemic domination of the North pushed aside and debilitate the philosophies, knowledge heritages and practices of the South (Woldegiorgis, 2020). She suggests re-centring Africa to its indigenous centre, which would make epistemic justice possible (Woldegiorgis, 2020).

However, she does not encourage restoring precolonial knowledge systems of Africa by going back to the past. This view implicitly rejects the importance of returning to sources of the past that reinforce the reproduction of knowledge in the future. This mere rejection of the past might be detrimental and deny the revival of the discontinued indigenous epistemes.

Informed by what he calls 'Epistemologies of the South', Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2016) urges that the oppressive and exclusionary impact of universal Western thoughts need to reverse with the knowledge systems developed in the South to bring epistemic justice in the postcolonial world (Santos, 2016). This view shows the intellectual and political urgency of rediscovering and restoring indigenous knowledge heritages in the South. Yet, he hardly engaged in rigorous exploration of the indigenous thinkers and their thoughts (Connell, 2014). Engaged in a similar ways of reacting, Walter D. Mignolo proposes what he calls "epistemic delinking" which is a radical break from Western modernity and traditions of knowledge (Mignolo, 2007b). Yet, one might make a point that delinking from the global knowledge system could be dysfunctional as global interconnectedness, albeit unequal, continues to exist the order of the contemporary world (Liebel, 2017; Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018). This tells us to find an alternative which considers this. In a similar vein, Edward Said acknowledges the reformulation of taken-for-granted Western academic disciplines and values that destabilize the knowledge ecology of the non-Western world. However, how to realize this through the resurgent of indigenous philosophies, knowledge heritages, and practices are yet to come.

3.3.2 Childhood and Decoloniality

Before getting into the tenets of the decolonial scholarship on childhood, it is important to identify two cornerstones that are considered pathbreaking events occurred to understand and advance children's lives. The first of which is the 1980s' epistemological and methodological break from developmentalism which views children as 'not yet adults', 'passive recipients of adults' knowledge", and in a 'process of becoming,' by childhood studies (current usage) which construct children as social actors and childhood as socially constructed phenomenon (James & Prout, 1997a). The second is ratifying the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989, which canonizes children as holders of rights as human beings (Boyden, 1990). As a result of this development, concepts of children and childhood have increasingly become topics of academic and policy discourse and concerns. Despite this, the use of a singular global standard of childhood rooted much more in Western traditions, although "multiple childhoods" (Boyden, 1990; James & Prout, 1997a; Saraswathi et al., 2017) exist in the so-called global south , attracting the attention of Southern scholarship of childhood (de Castro, 2019).

Decolonial theory problematizes the notion of a singular model of childhood entangled in the history, worldviews, and experiences of Europe and the United States that have been considered a universal standard by which other childhoods could be understood (de Castro, 2019; Kesby et al., 2006; Rabello de Castro, 2020) and "towards which all childhoods should aim at" (de Castro, 2019, p. 51). Similarly, Lucia Rabello de Castro argues that the orientalist theories 'legitimizes a scientific framework that universalizes the way in which all childhoods, their generational value and the future orientation that the notion of childhood purports should be envisaged' (Rabello de Castro, 2020, p. 2487). In other words, Hanson et al. argue that 'this framing closely aligns modernity

with a normative childhood thereby allowing for children whose lives fail to reflect these modern markers to become easily categorized within historicist and singular imaginings of development and progress' (Hanson et al., 2018, p. 292). This means that the universal model assigns a similar goal to "multiple childhoods" in the global south (Boyden, 1990; James & Prout, 1997a). Studies trace this in the historic referent to modernity which marks the Western experience as a normative standard through which other experiences are explained (Balagopalan, 2002; de Castro, 2019; Saraswathi et al., 2017). This, as Castro argues, allows for examining how childhood discourse is shaped by the hierarchical power relations rooted in the history of the contemporary world (de Castro, 2019).

In decoloniality theory, studies also provide critiques of the universal model of childhood. They question the evolutionary ways of thinking that justify the unilinear process that takes the modernity of the West as the stage towards which others should aspire and through which non-western childhoods are understood (Balagopalan, 2002; de Castro, 2019; Liebel, 2017). They also problematize the universal applicability of the model as it does not contain "other childhoods," multiple in forms and contents (Boyden, 1990; de Castro, 2019; Ennew & Milne, 1990; Saraswathi et al., 2017). In this way, southern childhoods are limited as a particular example, as they are not congruent with the requirements of the global model (de Castro, 2019; Nieuwenhuys, 2013; Saraswathi et al., 2017).

To address the limitations of the model, Kesby et. al. argue that it "must be unpacked and the diversity of other childhoods in the global South revealed" (Kesby et al., 2006, p. 198). In a similar vein, Abebe and Ofosu-Kusi suggest the need for reorienting the focus on children's contribution "to the reconfiguration of social and generational dynamics that unfolds in Africa" than attempting to stereotyping African childhood as 'deficit' through the eyes of the dominant narratives (Tatek Abebe & Yaw Ofosu-Kusi, 2016, p. 303). Cheney suggests a need to decolonize forms of research and practice in childhood studies beyond the simple recognition of the postcolonial narrative (Cheney, 2019). Anibal Quijano also suggests the dismantling of 'the colonial matrix of power' (Mignolo, 2011), which allows the restoration of indigenous epistemic continuity and could provide alternative ways of knowing in childhood studies to advance children's lives. To put it another way, this helps to rediscover what Abebe and Biswas call "lost epistememes" (Abebe & Biswas, 2021, p. 124). One may argue that such dismantling of the 'coloniality of power' may initiate an approach to childhood phenomena from a new perspective beyond restoring shattered indigenous epistememes (Mignolo, 2011). Yet, restoring these epistememes may not dismiss the contradiction between Western and non-Western conceptions of children and childhood. This may require an alternative approach that unites the knowledge generated in these worlds to reimagine childhood studies aiming to transform children's futures.

3.3.3 Decoloniality and Indigenous Resurgence

In her seminal work *Southern Theory* (2007), which is the variant of decolonial theory, Raewyn Connell focuses on the Southern epistemologies that recognize diverse knowledge and philosophies contained in the indigenous traditions of southern societies (Connell, 2007; Connell, 2013). Alongside with unpacking the implicit geopolitical ideologies of western knowledge, she brings the social thoughts and practices of colonial and postcolonial worlds to fore of academic discourse and promotes their relevance in contemporary changing world (Connell, 2013). She developed this approach based on

alternatives, but diverse, forms of indigenous epistemologies and experiences of the Global South (Australia, Latin America, India, post-colonial Africa, Islamic traditions, and others) that have shared colonial histories and the enduring impacts of western imperialism (Connell, 2007; Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018). She unfolds ways of being, knowing and doing located in the traditions of non-colonized societies like Ethiopian. This view does not deny the view that colonization and global south is beyond geography, but rather power and epistemic position. Still there might be epistemological traditions which make non-colonized people distinct as knowledge is contingent on geography and history. This, I imagine, may provide new insight into rethinking the southern theory although colonization is also beyond historical and geographical phenomenon (Mignolo, 2011).

Southern theory is not merely a way of uncovering the cultural differences between Western and non-Western world but also political as it prompt the resurgence of indigenous forms of knowledge through decoloniality acknowledging the "indigenous lifeways and alternative ways of being in the world" (Simpson, 2011, pp. 31-32, as cited in Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018, p. 722) (Simpson, 2011:31- 32 cited in Ritzer). It advocates the importance of reinstating and re-learning indigenous philosophes, politics and lived experiences unto their transforming end of the future of the global South (Connell, 2007; Connell, 2013; Dei et al., 2022). However, a mere advocacy of indigenous forms of knowledges and condemning and resistance to the global hegemonic knowledge system may not emancipate Ethiopia's education and the types of aspiration children form, for instance, from foreign biases. The question however then is how this could be achieved without having epistemological hierarchies between Western knowledge, which claims universality, and indigenous resurgence, which wants to restore knowledge heritages and practices. This may lead us to rethink other ways of understanding the issue.

3.4 Sankofa Theory

Sankofa is an indigenous African philosophy (Tedla, 1995). It is a word in the Akan language of Ghana that is rooted in a proverb: "Se wo were fi na wosankofa a yenkyi," which translates to "It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten" (Beale, 2013, p. 7). It is the idea of returning to the source and retrieving knowledge that has been lost or forgotten (Tedla, 1995; Walker & Mungazi, 1995). In other words, Sankofa refers to the concept of learning from the past in order to build a better future.

In her book *Sankofa: African Thought and Education* (1995), Elleni Tedla adopted this philosophy to commented on the importance of rethinking African education oriented towards renovating the indigenous education in which culture, heritage and identity of the people is located. Drawing on this, she (1995, p. 1) commented that:

As we move forward into the future, we need to reach back into our past and take with us all that work and is positive. . . . to focus on what is positive so Africans can build on it as a foundation for future education.

Tellingly, in this quote, the concept of 'past' doesn't just refer to a time horizon, but also to indigenous education that encompasses wisdom, knowledge, culture, identity, history, philosophies, worldviews, and practices. In this context, one can view indigenous education as a way to move forward by learning from the past and taking all necessary knowledge, philosophy, history, and practices that have been marginalized for future lives. However, revitalizing the past may not necessarily require decentring present achievements in knowledge spheres to advance children's lives. Similarly, returning to

the past may not always be feasible. Therefore, this may suggest the need to recognize the points where the past and present intersect and are synthesized.

3.5 Relational Theory

3.5.1 Agency and Relationality

Along with the growth in studies on children's rights of the 1990s and the epistemological shift to the social construction of childhood phenomena from the predetermined objective notion of childhood by developmental psychology an increase in interest among researchers in 'independence', 'autonomous' and 'competence' of children came (James & Prout, 1997). Agency becomes the celebrated concept and area of research in childhood scholarship to advance children's rights and well-being. James and James define children's agency as "the capacity of individuals to act *independently*" (James & James, 2012, p. 3, emphasis mine). In a similar vein, Prout and James argue that children are "active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and the societies in which they live" (Prout & James, 1997, p. 8). They accord great autonomy to the child actor. Slightly differently, Robson et al. (2007) also define children's agency as their abilities to "navigate the contexts and positions of their life worlds...while simultaneously charting individual and/or collective choice and possibilities for their daily and future lives" (as cited in Panelli et al., 2007, p. 135).

Despite recognizing the importance of agency in theorizing children's rights and voices and deconstructing the notion that children are the objects of knowledge, the view that children are autonomous or independent agents has been contested in the relationality of childhood. A growing body of studies examine the interdependences between generations and how these shape children's interests and experiences. This refutes the individualistic notion of agency. For instance, Abebe (2019) argues that the needs and interests of children are not independent of their families and social relations. Alanen et al. (2015) also explain that the social positions of children are negotiated by their intergenerational relationships. Smørholm (2016) recognizes the importance of putting emphasis on how children's agency constitutes and is constituted by the structure. This reminds us of Anthony Giddens's structuration theory, in which he argues that agency and structure are intertwined (Giddens, 1979; Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018). Kjørholt (2005) called the need for contextual ways of knowing about children's lives and agencies. Besides, Bordonaro and Payne (2012) contend that the recognition of children as social actors fell into the trap of liberal ideals and failed to understand how situated social, cultural, and historical circumstances negotiate and renegotiate the independent choices of children. Similarly, Spyrou (2018, p. 121) recognizes that "the 'discovery' of the independent and autonomous child-agent has become "a conceptual trap for childhood studies and an obstacle to its theoretical imagination." One might also argue that it traps childhood studies in the womb of the 'global child' notion rooted in a particular ideology. In many ways, this presupposes the significance of unpacking the practices of structures and historicize them in theorizing the aspirations and future prospects of children.

3.5.2 Relationality and Childhood Aspirations

The relational view of childhood is a contemporary trend in childhood scholarship. Seemingly rejecting theories that promote individualistic emphasis, relationality focuses on the relational dimension of children's agency and aspirations. Recent studies have

examined how aspirations of children are negotiated and reproduced through such structures as families and schooling (See Appadurai, 2004; Baker et al., 2014; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977/1990; DeJaeghere, 2016; Hart, 2012; Reed-Danahay, 2005). Some others (e.g., Baker et al., 2014; Bernard & Taffesse, 2012) have examined how children's and young people's aspirations are formed and located in these structures and social relations. In other words, they highlighted how the formation of aspirations by children and young people are patterned by the ethos of institutions. Drawing on the dialectical position, Gutman and Akerman (2008) also noted how social structures sometimes contain contradictions with individual aspirations. The needs, ideologies, and practices of the structure conflict with the desires of the individual.

Despite recognizing the importance of relational approach, how children's aspirations are historically negotiated and indigenously reimagined has received little attention. There is a tendency to underscore this aspect while conceptualizing aspirations relationally. Inasmuch as changes in institutions, for instance educational policies, are not considered, unpacking children's aspirations and reimagining their future might be inadequate.

3.6 Summary

This chapter defined aspirations as children's future desires shaped by institutions and historical conditions. It evinced how futurity is located in historical circumstances and the present lives of children and young people. Such theories as decoloniality, deconstruction, relationality, and indigenous Ethiopian philosophy were discussed to examine a global childhood notion and the functions of modern schooling to this end. It also discussed how decoloniality opens the possibility of the resurgence of indigenous knowledge heritages useful to rethink aspirations constructed through the promises of modern schooling. The relational dimension of children's agency and aspirations were examined. A brief of the Ethiopian conception of futurity was also described.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive account of the methodology used in the present study. To begin, the philosophical stance that underpins the methodological approach is described, followed by an examination of the position of study participants and how this stance shapes the knowledge production process in the study. The design employed and the rationale for its selection are then detailed, with a discussion of the research sites and the recruitment process for samples, including the reasons for their selection. Next, my positionality and reflexivity are explained with a focus on the dilemmas encountered in the research process and how they were addressed. This is followed by a detailed description of my role as a researcher. The methods for data collection and analysis are then presented, including a discussion of their strengths and weaknesses. The author provides a triangulation and matching matrix in table form, where research questions, types of study participants, and data collection and analysis methods are presented for ease of understanding. Finally, the ethical principles applied in the study are examined, with a discussion of the ethical and practical challenges faced and the strategies adopted to overcome them. By presenting a detailed and transparent account of the methodology used, the author enables the reader to better understand the research process and the trustworthiness of the study findings.

4.2 Methodological Approach and the Positioning of the Study Participants

I followed a relativist participatory approach (Ravenek & Rudman, 2013), in which knowledge and multiple worldviews about children's aspirations and futures were co-produced as social facts by the researcher and the research participants. Here, a relativistic view denotes the idea that the conception of children's futures and aspirations is subject to different meanings in response to different historical, social, political, religious, and economic situations. It is an alternative to advocating historically, socially, and politically situated knowledge (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018), which people unfold in making their present and future lives. This recognizes their perspectives and experiences as sources of knowledge and philosophies important for reimagining children's future aspirations through assessing the significance of indigenous education in this regard. The relativist stance is seemingly canonical in childhood scholarship and becomes a position in the academic circle to challenge the hegemonic explanations as it advocates a context-specific and participant-centred way of examining children and childhood phenomena. This position, however, may overlook what could be described as cross-cultural realities, which are shared by societies regardless of their diversity in historical, social, political, and cultural facts. I believe this transcends the contemporary North-South divide trend in theorizing childhood realities in the field. Yet, this is beyond the focus of the current research. To explore the historical socio-political contexts of modern schooling in Ethiopia, I followed the critical realist stance (Ravenek & Rudman, 2013).

The most satisfying thing about participatory approaches is that they recognize the research participants as subjects of research (Beazley & Ennew, 2006; Lange & Mierendorff, 2009) and/or "knowing subjects" (Balen et al., 2006, p. 30) who possess competencies and experiences and engage in producing knowledge important for their aspirations and visions of the future. Here, child participants are positioned as members of societies who are able to examine the role of indigenous education and make use of it for their social, economic, spiritual, political, and cultural aspirations for the future. Yet, since different stakeholders were involved, this position has not been performed in a vacuum but rather negotiated by and dependent on the expectations of their parents, schools, and educational policy changes, through which their aspirations are mostly produced, modified, and/or altered. It is in this sense that I wanted to consider the research participants as co-creators of knowledge about the issue under examination. This repositions children and local stakeholders as knowledge producers (Istratii & Lewis, 2019) about modern schooling and how it should be locally relevant to children's aspirations. However, given their participation as co-producers in the knowledge production process, which constitutes their perspectives and experiences, assigning a weight to their contribution remains difficult, at least in this research.

4.3 Research Design

My relativistic stance is subject to qualitative research design. I chose this design for several reasons. First, I was aware that it is inherent in childhood scholarship to unpack the worldviews, perspectives, experiences, and practices about childhood aspirations and children's prospects for the future. Second, it is an alternative to the positivistic explanation, which focuses on a precise numerical investigation of children's aspirations but not on how children construct their aspirations and future vision. Third, this design allowed me to provide a detailed account of how children harness indigenous education as the key ingredient to making their future, something that a quantitative strategy cannot do. Beyond this, it enabled me to engage in a detailed analysis of how indigenous knowledge is linked to children's aspirations and futures, relying on indigenous knowledge creation methodologies, which I discussed in the analysis method section of this chapter. Fifth, I wanted to engage in an in-depth examination of how children make sense of their future in a context where their aspirations are socially embedded and produced through their relationships with their parents, schools, and educational policies. Sixth, this design allowed me to form an egalitarian relationship (Hammersley, 1992) with the study participants, but this issue continues to be a matter of debate in childhood research and in the academic community in general. I reflect on this issue in this section.

However, qualitative design has not been used in this research without some methodological limitations. Because the study population was limited to participants from the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tāwahaḍo* Church, findings may not be applicable to Muslims, protestants, or other believers. Yet, some issues may not be reduced to the trap of sampling science despite their political urgency and importance to the public at large. This does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that adding more samples and involving a different section of the population is not important; rather, what matters most may be the value of the knowledge produced by the people involved in the research. This also does not mean taking the views of small samples for granted to explain the views and interests of others, but rather recognizing the importance of methodological prescription in which the knowledge produced by some may be used to understand others if they share similar historical, political, social, and cultural lives. This does also not mean taking

the views of small samples for granted to explain the views and interest of others. Rather, it recognizes the importance of methodological prescription in which the knowledge produced by some may be used to understand others if they share similar historical, political, social and cultural lives.

In addition, despite exploring the perspectives of the participants using qualitative methods, an explanation of the accurate causal inferences and interpretation of the impact of indigenous education on children's aspirations is difficult in this qualitative research. I addressed this by inferring interpretations from the responses of the participants that involved certain causal connections and/or tendencies. Another area of contention in this type of research design is that the socio-demographic and economic attributes of the researcher are likely to affect the behaviour and perspectives of participants. This subjects to Max Weber's idea of value-free research, in which "social scientists should *not let their personal values* influence their scientific research in any way" way' (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018, p. 178, emphasis added). How a researcher can control and keep personal characteristics out of the research process is an ongoing debate. I recognize the importance of excluding personal characteristics; however, they may be important in specific aspects of the research process if they do not privilege the researcher over the researched. Because the knowledge was co-produced in this study, there may have been influences from my backgrounds and methodological position, but I reflected on them in a transparent way.

Before I conclude this section, it is important to discuss some issues to assess the quality of this research. As it provides detailed accounts of the perspectives and experiences of participants and contextual understandings of the relationship between indigenous education and children's aspirations, the findings may be transferred to other settings. It was one of my major tasks to properly describe the research process from the very beginning—from the identification of the research topic to the analysis of the information generated with participants—and document it to make it accessible to research participants, my supervisor, and finally the academic community. I was asked by some of the adult participants, mainly parents, involved to give them the findings of the research so they could give me feedback. I emailed them some preliminary findings for their feedback. Although I have brought my theoretical position and experiences into the research area under investigation, the perspectives of participants have not been subjected to my personal characteristics. I will return to this issue shortly.

4.4 Entering the field and doing fieldwork

4.4.1 Research Sites and Participants Recruitment

4.4.1.1 Selection of Research Sites

Prior to fieldwork, I spent four months working on the research proposal with the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Norway. I spent my first two months collecting relevant literature and writing the draft proposal, getting important feedback from my supervisor, whose comments were significant in shaping my initial ideas. After that, I spent three months in Ethiopia conducting ethnographic fieldwork with children and adults living in the research sites. Two cities were selected for the study (see Appendix I). These cities are Addis Ababa and Adama (also called Nazareth), which are

among Ethiopia's most educational, political, religious, industrial, and commercial hubs and are home to various cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious communities. Addis Ababa is the country's capital city, and Adama is located in Ethiopia's Oromia regional state, 99 kilometres South East of Addis Ababa. Subsequently, two *Gubae Bets* (Indigenous schools), namely *Dagmawi Menelik Metasebiya* (also called *Taeka Negest Ba'eta LeMaryam*) and *YeNazretu Eyesus*, located in Addis Ababa and Adama cities, respectively, were selected for this study.

I selected these *Gubae Bets* as study cities for four main reasons. First, a large number of boys and girls, both from government and private formal schools (some of them religiously affiliated), were enrolled in these *Gubae Bets* during the summer season (the three-month closing period of formal schooling in the country) while this study was conducted. Second, I personally experienced the education at *YeNazretu Eyesus Gubae Bet* (Jesus of Nazareth Indigenous School), in which I was enrolled from 2010 to 2021 in *Zema Bet* (the House of Hymn), although I did not graduate. This allowed me to establish rapport quickly and obtain consent from the children, parents, and *Yenetas* (teachers). Thirdly, *Dagmawi Menelik Metasebiya* was the first indigenous school in the Palace district of Addis Ababa, established in 1933. Fourthly, although there were ancient *Gubae Bets* in the country that I wanted to include in this study, I could not reach them due to the fact that the Ethiopian Government issued a 2021–2022 state of emergency in the country, so I could not travel to these areas.

4.4.1.2 Participants Recruitment

Prior to the recruitment of participants, I spent four days per week in the *Gubae Bets*, where I also restarted my education, which had been discontinued when I decided to attend the master's program at NTNU, Norway. In the *Gubae Bets*, *Yenetas* (the head teachers) assigned me to assist them in teaching students (*yeabnät tämariwoc*⁴) about the subjects that I was already trained in. I engaged in teaching for a month and 15 days without explaining to the children that I would conduct research. Nonetheless, some of them were aware that I was studying in a foreign country and had returned for a vacation. In this situation, I had the chance to become acquainted with many children. However, for ethical reasons, I did not ask them or observe anything before I got consent from *Yenetas* (the head teachers) and the children themselves to include them in my study. I explain this further in the section about ethical considerations.

Although there were children who attended either, I recruited those who met the criterion of concurrently attending both modern schooling and indigenous education in the Ethiopian Orthodox *Täwahədo* church. Eight children (two girls and five boys) were selected; five of them were from *YeNazretu Eyesus*, and the remaining were from *Dagmawi Menelik Metasebiya Gubae Bets* (Indigenous schools). I planned to recruit 13- to 15-year-old boys and girls. However, children below 13 years old were sampled as they met the criterion of having experience in these two educational systems. The main reason for selecting only these children was that I needed to sample those familiar with both educational systems to investigate how they distinguish between modern and indigenous education and how they use them for their aspirations and futures. Purposive sampling was employed to choose them as they and their parents had educational backgrounds and experiences in both the Ethiopian Orthodox *Täwahədo* church and

⁴ Also known as *yäqolo tämariwoc*

modern schooling. Although I acknowledge the limitations of this sampling technique in obtaining representatives of children in the study sites, it allowed me to sample participants who generated information relevant to the topic under investigation. Only five parents (four from Adama and one from Addis Ababa) were interested in participating.

Two *Yenetas* (head teachers) from the two *Gubae Bets* (*YeNazretu Eyesus* and *Dagmawi Menelik Metasebiya*) and four church scholars who engaged in research activities on ancient indigenous Ethiopian wisdoms, mainly on the ways in which they could be used to redesign the entire system of education in the country. Two of these four people were the leaders of the Moya *Tāwahado* religious-intellectual movement in the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tāwahado* Church, who believe that there is an ideologically, structurally, and systematically patterned attack on the Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and the church's traditions and knowledge heritages. They are also members of *Mahebarā Qedusan* (Association in the Name of Saints), which is set under the Sunday School Department of the Church. The other two were the director general of Ethiopia's National Archives and Library Agency, who studied Ethiopian literature in *Ge'ez* and provided an insiders perspective on modern schooling, and the owner of the Andromeda television program (named after Prince Andromeda, daughter of King Cepheus and Queen Cassiopeia of Ethiopia), which is the country's first of its kind and promotes the relearning of indigenous knowledge and wisdom. In addition, four schoolteachers, two elderly people (who were not part of the plan), and a representative from the educational development sector, which is responsible for designing national educational policies and strategies, among other things, at the Federal Ministry of Education (MoE), participated in the research.

Except for the interviewee from the sector, participants were selected through snowball sampling since having educational backgrounds in indigenous Ethiopian churches and modern schooling was the main criterion. The sample size for child participants was determined while data saturation (Bryman & Bell, 2019) was achieved, and I continued sampling them until little new insight was generated after multiple interviews.

4.4.2 Positionality and Reflexivity

As I have discussed earlier in this chapter, I have adopted a relativist approach with a critical gaze in which I am conscious of the co-production of knowledge with children, parents, head teachers (*Yenetas*), church scholars, schoolteachers, and educational policymakers about indigenous education and the influences on the aspirations of children and their futures. This approach influenced my positionality, which in turn determined the knowledge generation process and its interpretation (Bilgen et al., 2021) with those participants. As we will see, in any ethnographic research, there are insider and outsider positions for the researcher (Bilgen et al., 2021; Paechter, 2013). Recognizing the blurred lines between them (Paechter, 2013) and my difficulty identifying either, I examined the positions I was in and the ambiguities I encountered.

There were a number of factors to share the insider position with the study participants. For one thing, I shared with them similar Ethiopian Orthodox backgrounds and experiences in the *Gubae Bets* (Indigenous schools). For another, the research questions I identified and the methods of analysis I chose were based on my lived experiences in

these schools. In this case, my status as an insider allowed me to easily access the study sites, co-generate the information that the participants may not have shared with an outsider, and win their trust. Yet, my insider position, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1996) argued, does not necessarily lead to obtaining truth and more valid data. Except for a few child participants, many of them were open to sharing their perspectives and experiences on how they used modern and Indigenous education to achieve their aspirations. The parents, church scholars, and schoolteachers appreciated the topic of study as relevant and timely, and they openly shared their views and feelings about it with me. Referring to the value of indigenous education, they were also energetic in responding to the question I raised with them. Yet, many of them expected me to show sympathy for making the traditions and knowledge heritages of the country internationally known and respectable. They thought that I had the obligation to provide these services to the community, and I had been enthusiastic about this responsibility. In addition, I was struggling to distance myself from interpreting the information generated without taking it for granted, as I had engaged in co-producing the information.

Though I positioned myself as an indigenous insider, as I was more fully engaged with modern schooling since my childhood, which I assumed to be alien to the local people, I felt that I was an academic outsider. I received training in modern schooling and have applied some technical knowledge that is clearly non-indigenous in its form and type but important in opening up nuanced ways of looking at children's everyday local practices and experiences. My academic-outsider status has me preoccupied with situating the children's future within the broader historic-political process and envisioning the possibility of exploring the strategies by which the participants and stakeholders harness indigenous education to the aspirations of children. However, what I wished to avoid in positioning myself as an outsider was evaluating the perspectives and experiences of the participants, placing the scientific attitude at the centre of analysis, which sometimes overlooks indigenous knowledge that has yet to be developed. I could not distance myself from my insider identity, but sometimes I felt distance from the insider position while I did not access the data from church scholars with whom I shared similar backgrounds and experiences. I felt that they partially shared with me their perspectives and experiences about the issue under investigation.

Sometimes I found the boundaries to be so seemingly unclear and ambiguous that it was difficult for me to delineate my insider or outsider status. I felt that I provided a great deal of attention to them, but that either extreme did not provide me with a special privilege to access the information relevant to the study. My academic-outsider position cannot be explained apart from my insider experiences. Therefore, instead of positioning myself either way, I realized that my experiences could be explained better along the insider-outsider continuum line. That is to say, I negotiated with the insider and outsider positions as my interests in unfolding the aspirations of children are influenced both by my emic perspective on the practices and lives of the study participants and by the theoretical and practical concerns I acquired in my intellectual career in academia.

Though I describe my reflexive position elsewhere in this thesis, here I discuss theoretical and methodological concerns. I came from religious and indigenous intellectual backgrounds in which religious doctrine is not guided and informed by reasons and people's experiences. Clearly, this conveyed the importance of the revealed knowledge—the divine knowledge—that is not subjected to changes as our scientific knowledge and level of understanding advance. This widely held view oriented me to

question the view that reality is relative and socially constructed, one of the key features of childhood studies (Prout & James, 1990). Although I am aware that childhood scholarships are more concerned with discussing aspects of childhood social realities, I would not have been able to understand these without my religious and indigenous intellectual perspectives, and I felt that little attention has been paid to the importance of the search for an ever-present, cross-culturally shared framework neutrally describing the multi-layered children and childhood realities. I want to gain a better understanding of it and push it forward in my future childhood scholarship. It has taken me a long time to theoretically position myself in this research because of my concern with realities. Thus, I was half-hearted and struggling when I conducted this research, adopting the relativist approach, though I found it important, particularly to examine the alien nature of modern schooling and its limitations in realizing its promise.

As my thinking and previous research were highly influenced by a positivistic approach, I was initially sceptical about whether the knowledge produced with participants employing the qualitative methodology would be 'precise.' However, I was fortunate to move in the direction of improving this preconception as I more actively engaged in reading and participated in qualitative research seminars. This helped me envision indigenous knowledge production methods (*Terguamme* and *Hatäta*) and interpret and analyse the information generated with the participants. Using local knowledge creation methodologies in this type of academic research was both challenging and novel for me. My indigenous educational lived experience and engagement with modern schooling shaped my worldviews, which in turn influenced my ways of knowing, making hypothetical speculations, understanding, and making meaning of the participants' accounts and drawing conclusions.

I have been exposed to a strong feeling of depression while I read the literature for the purpose of the present study about how the introduction of the modernization project and later the Marxist rhetoric in Ethiopia delink the nation from its history and Indigenous knowledge treasures. Accordingly, although I was a co-producer of the data, I was frustrated with how I should proceed to interpret the information generated with participants while avoiding these strong emotions. However, I had continued readings about how to manage and reduce depression about the topic in order to reduce the influence of such feelings in the process of knowledge production, to meet the ethical requirements of the research, and to 'actually' represent the voices of the study participants.

As I was in the midst of writing, I was struck with distress upon learning of a concerning event taking place in the Oromia region of Ethiopia. A group had taken an uncanonical action, separating themselves from the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähädo Church, where my study was situated. The group went on to ordain 26 bishops, which was a clear violation of the ecclesiastical and canonical legitimacy of the church. They then proceeded to create an ethnic-based patriarchate that completely disregarded the Apostolic Succession norm of Orthodoxy, amounting to nothing less than a coup d'état. Their aim was to dissolve the Holy Synod and remove the Canonical Patriarch and Catholicos of Ethiopia, His Holiness Abune Mathias I, the Archbishop of Axum, and Echege, the See of Saint Teklehaimanot. This movement was politically sponsored and supported by ethnic extremists who sought to destroy a centuries-old church that had long protected the unity of the nation.

While this movement did not have a direct impact on the findings of my research, it was difficult for me to manage. The news of this movement had an impact around the world, and it was clear that this was a concerning event that warranted attention and action.

4.4.3 Researcher Role

Though various factors influence role choices in child research, socially situated power differentials between adult researchers and child participants are the primary concern of childhood scholarship. This is because, as (Berger, 2015); Corsaro (1996); (De Laine, 2000; Mandall, 1991) argue, power differentials and the role the researcher plays influence the research process. Studies have suggested different types of roles, for instance, the 'atypical adult'(Corsaro, 1996), the 'least adult role' (Mandall, 1991), the 'friendly adult' (Ahsan, 2009), and the 'friendly role' (Abebe, 2009), in order to re-correct the power asymmetries that exist between adult researchers and child participants and reposition the status of children in the researcher-researched relationship. Despite this primary benefit of the roles, it is debatable to what extent they reduce unequal power relations and help the researcher build trust with children. Is it even possible to establish "true friendship" in short-term ethnographic fieldwork? It may not be necessary that the researcher moulds his or her adult self to minimize power and enter the lifeworld of children to explore their perspectives and experiences. But, most generally, it might be through showing deserving love and respect to children that the researcher empowers them and manages the unequal operation of power in the relationship. So, the genuine personality of the researcher matters most.

I planned to assume the friendly role and attempt to address the question of power differentials between child participants and myself. However, because humility, politeness, and obedience to the headteachers (*Yenetas*) and senior students in the *Guba Bets* are the most valued behaviours expected from each student, junior students believe that approaching elders in a friendly manner is disrespectful to them and violates the school's traditions, even though it is not. Though it took me a long time before they approached me freely, but I gradually achieved this during my teaching assistantship position with the headteachers (*Yenetas*). Since then, they started to ask me about my experiences in the *Guba Bets* and modern schooling, how I managed to attend these educational systems parallelly, the level of education I achieved, and so forth. Referring to my achievements in these educational systems, some of them said "you are a double-edged sword," though I did not claim so. I have a lot to achieve. This rather tells me how much they valued these educational systems. However, I skipped some of the questions because I suspected that my response may have influenced their responses when I asked them during the data collection process. I did not ask them any questions in return, as I had not gotten their consent to start the data collection yet. Therefore, I do not think that the friendly role that I assumed led to control over the children's behaviour, conduct, and perspective during the data collection period. Rather, I remember the words written in Matthew 18, Verse 10: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you," which guided me as to what was expected of me when I interacted with them. I acknowledged the active roles of children and their competencies for sharing their experiences and thoughts. I was aware of and reflected on my every interaction with them to make sure that my intellectual authority (my assistant position and higher education achievements they know) did not exert any influence on their responses to the question I asked them. Beyond this, coming from an insider position

and being aware of the norms and expected behaviours in the *Gubae Bets* and how to communicate with them, I was fortunate to reach an understanding with them.

As the research was conducted in a situation where the hierarchy of power relationships is visible and believed to be functional in maintaining social bonds, sometimes I found myself questioning why I was struggling to minimize a set of power relations in my interaction with children and even with adult participants. As an insider, I observed that the power differences with respect to children are not instrumental; rather, they are in pursuit of disciplining them to value the literary, spiritual, and intellectual heritages inherited from the elderly and previous generations. But this does not mean that the power hierarchy has always manifested this desired outcome for the children. Therefore, it is partly the genuine personality of the researcher (an adult) to internalize the importance of power relations in terms of benefiting the children and enhancing their lives and futures. I mention this because I encountered people who criticized me for the humility I showed to children to win their trust. This may be for two reasons. For one thing, they knew that I was the only one with an academic position in a higher educational institution currently attending school in the *Guba Bets*. For another, they wanted me to have a very limited relationship with children, for fear of them becoming less disciplined in respecting the elders. However, though I recognize the importance of the level of interaction, I was also aware of the advantage of approaching them and maintaining distance with them.

4.4.4 Data Collection Methods

In this section, I describe the main research methods employed and examine their strengths and weaknesses and their ethical implications. Drawing on the relativist epistemological position and with a commitment to unpacking the participants' perspectives and experiences, I employed different qualitative research methods, namely, the semi-structured interview, focus group discussion, imaginative drawing, ranking and scoring, informal dialogue, and field diary, as approaches. As Kesby (2007) argues, these methods become relevant in research with children and young people in the global South. I have also used YouTube as a data source after obtaining consent from participants. In what follows, I discuss each of these methods.

4.4.4.1 Semi-Structured Interview

During fieldwork in Ethiopia, I conducted semi-structured interviews with seven children, four parents, two *Yenetas* (headteachers), four church scholars, and four schoolteachers either at home, in the office, or at *Gubae Bets* (Indigenous schools). I formulated a list of questions to guide the turn-taking conversations and conducted the interviews separately with them. The interview guides seeking information from children and other participants were prepared to examine what indigenous education means to them, their perspectives about its use for children's futures, how children use indigenous education and modern schooling to meet their aspirations, and how their aspirations are negotiated with parents' expectations and changing educational policies. The interviews were flexible, meaning I did not follow the exact wording and order of questions in the guide, depending on the conditions and how the interviewees addressed the questions raised. The interviews lasted between 15 minutes and one and a half hours and were audio-recorded. All interviews were conducted in the local language, Amharic, which I also speak.

The popularity of qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviewing, is that they respond to the limitations of quantitative methods, which do not appropriately examine the knowledge constructed and the subjective meanings that emerge in interactions between the researcher(s) and participants (Bryman & Bell, 2019). In this study, semi-structured interviewing allowed me to generate detailed information about children's understanding and perspectives on how they make sense of their aspirations and futures in a conversational manner and observe their feelings, which may not be possible in a survey questionnaire or in a focus group discussion where they feel anxious or experience frustration (Bryman & Bell, 2019; Grant, 2017). It allowed me to elicit children's accounts of why they attend *Gubae Bets* (Indigenous schools), who told them about it when they first developed an interest in indigenous school education, how the knowledge acquired in *Gubae Bets* (Indigenous schools) and formal schooling are important for what they aspire to achieve, and so on, as well as observe their feelings in interview settings. The interviews with adult participants allowed me to explore in what ways they shape children's aspirations and futures, their emotional responses to missing elements in modern schooling, and the role indigenous education plays in this regard.

Although it offered me an opportunity to learn about children's individual ideas and feelings, I faced some practical challenges when conducting semi-structured interviews with them. The most significant were interruptions in the interview process and continuing recordings of their voices. Despite explaining the purpose of the interview and why I wanted them to interview separately, they appeared multiple times during the interview, while I only interviewed one. As a result, the interview lacked consistency in the recordings, and I felt that the interviewee was in danger of losing focus on the questions raised. While the reasons for this are varied, this may be attributed partly because they are friends, believe that their appearance at the interview would not have any implications on the outcomes of the research, are eager to know the questions that they would be asked in advance and want to listen to their friends' responses, and so on. I observed that they stopped talking and conceal their views when their friends arrived. Although they asked me to continue the interview in front of others, I felt that their reactions and responses were not as possible as before. Therefore, I decided not to continue the interview in this situation because I promised to keep the responses confidential. But I was worried about the meanings they attached when I stopped asking them immediately after others arrived. Yet, I continued to explain to those who interrupted the session why I wanted children to attend individually. Still, I was worried about what the children who I asked to leave the session would think.

As previously discussed in this chapter, I define reality as historically situated in its indigenous context and co-created in the interaction between the researcher (me) and participants. Accordingly, I was involved in the conversations whereby children's perspectives were reshaped by my understanding and experiences of indigenous education and modern schooling. This essentially shifted children's roles in the research process as co-producers of information about the issue under investigation. However, it was difficult for me to clearly see this as they were not involved in the analysis and interpretation of the data.

4.4.4.2 Focus Group Discussion [FGD]

This study also draws on the data generated with a group of children consisting of five members. Unlike the survey method, focus group discussion discourages considering

individual participants as objects of interviewing (Bryman & Bell, 2019; Lloys-Evans, 2017). Although I planned and received consent to conduct this in Addis Ababa with children who have been awarded a certificate from the Ethiopian Space Science and Technology Institute for their analysis of indigenous knowledge on astronomy, I could not access them as the gatekeepers did not respond to my weeklong, multiple calls. This was an embarrassing situation for me but I decided to change the location and conduct it in Adama, where I had access to five children.

Even though I organized the discussion, and it was relaxing for the children to share their perspectives, there were a number of practical challenges. First, although they confirmed to me that they understood the purpose of the discussion and the points of the group conversations after I described them, they took longer to start it. Second, even when one started to talk about the questions posed, he/she checked the reactions of others and sometimes stopped talking. This happened many times. This may be linked to a lack of experience in group discussion in this kind of exercise and fear that others would evaluate them. Third, when I tried to pose the questions very simply, answers were often less relevant to the research questions. As a result, the dilemma facing was that if I continued the discussion, I would be less effective in generating data to achieve the research questions, but if I discontinued that session, I would fail to respect their rights to share information in the way they understand. However, since I was part of the conversation, I was involved to call attention to the points (*Fire Neger*, in Amharic) and I found it useful to redirect their focus, but I was conscious and continuously reflected on whether my suggestions influenced their responses.

4.4.4.3 Imaginative Drawings

One of the methodological advances in childhood studies is the widespread use of participatory methods that have served emancipatory purposes by liberating children's perspectives from indigenous methods such as focus group discussion (Grant, 2017). Recognizing this significance, and in order to overcome the difficulties encountered during the focus group discussion, I used imaginative drawings to unpack how indigenous education responds to children's present and future aspirations. This method enabled them to feel personally and intellectually involved in exercising power to represent a picture of their aspirations and prospects for the future. This technique helped me to avoid the challenge of responding to questions in linear sequences, which is very common in survey questionnaires and sometimes in semi-structured interviewing.

In this study, this method constituted two important drawing sessions. First, children drew what they aspired to without being told to link it with their schooling. This helped me obtain their general vision of the future and their expectations of it. Second, they represented their vision of how indigenous education would help them realize their hope. In both cases, instructions were given to the children, and they described their drawings separately, taking five minutes each. This was the session they enjoyed most, and they were more interested in sharing their interpretations of what they pictured than in the focus group discussion. They engaged in the task autonomously I did not instruct them on what they drew but rather told them the objective of drawing. However, though they started and continued to draw, two of them informed me that they did not have the skill to do it and asked me after some minutes what they would draw. This was the situation where I remembered the inappropriateness of drawing for children who had very limited or no experience with drawing. I observed that some of those who can draw cannot

represent their ideas in a picture. Yet, as the most important thing is the meaning they attach to it, I did not judge their picture in any way.

Nonetheless, practical and ethical issues arose. Instead of concentrating on their individual activities, three children attempted to see what their friends were drawing, violating our agreement not to look at what others were drawing. But after I reminded them of the rules, they agreed to follow them and returned to their work. Furthermore, while all children in the study concealed their drawings from their peers, they did not do the same for young children (3–4 years old) who were not participants but were allowed to join the group at the participants' request. When I asked them to leave the room and re-join the group after the exercises, the children who took part asked that I allow young children to join them. This was the situation in which I was concerned about the impact on the children who were participating in the drawings. Although the source of the problem had not yet been identified, one of the participants complained after the session ended. The Beaman⁵ presented a complaint as follows:

She was staring at my drawing as she tried to take the colored pen from my drawing board. If they look at the edge of my picture, it is easy for them to guess. While he was drawing, he was looking up at my picture....I saw him, but he did not know I was aware. I warned them not to see my drawing but to focus on their own. Though I hide it from their view, they do not stop to see mine. I became angry and frustrated with what they were doing. I was convinced myself that they did not see it, but after the exercise ended, they told me everything was seen. That is what happened. What they did is morally wrong. It impacted my morale. What I drew is a secret, which I did not share with anybody except my friend Nolawi. Even I do not want to tell my teachers at school. It is a secret.

As the above quest shows, Beaman accused all children who participated in the drawing activities of looking at his drawings, even though he was not sure whether they actually saw them. It is important to remember that children are aware of what is going on around them. He emotionally expressed that he needed moral treatment, wanted to see what others drew, and saw this as a solution to his bad feeling. Although I shared his moral state and feelings, I could not agree to show him the drawings of others, as I should keep them confidential and investigate the issue further. Accordingly, I asked other participants, who confirmed that they did not see his picture. But he was not convinced and continued to complain. Though I assured him there would be no consequences, he was concerned. This may reveal how concerned children are with keeping their personal aspirations and interests hidden. I was having a difficult time managing the case. I discussed it with him several times, reflecting on myself and whether I took either side, and he accepted why I couldn't share other people's drawings, giving examples of how such attitudes and feelings may occur in this type of exercise.

4.4.4.4 Informal Dialogue

As the fieldwork for this study progressed, informal conversations were held with children, *Yenetas* (headteachers), and local elderly, knowledgeable people. They were used as a supplement to semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGD), but they were most effective in eliciting more nuanced perspectives on gaps in modern schooling, the experiences of children, the role of indigenous education in children's future lives, and how children construct their aspirations and negotiating factors.

⁵ All the names in this study are pseudonyms.

In the *Gubae Bets*, it was common practice for the *Yenetas* (headteachers) to have discussions on a wide range of topics that were directly or indirectly related to the student's experiences of learning and how they could achieve the highest level of church education, as well as a variety of ways they could improve their future lives after class ended (*wänbär ketefäta bähwala*). They were humble and friendly and willing to share their views, especially the success stories of their former students (*yeabnät tämariwoc*) and the experiences of those who dropped out. They asked some of the students (*yeabnät tämariwoc*) about their interests and what they aspired to achieve in the future through church education. Their discussion was democratic and respectful; it did not have an instructive element. It was an interactive way of sharing knowledge and experiences. I used a field diary to record all these after I went home. This offered me an excellent opportunity and opened the window to engage students (*yeabnät tämariwoc*) in the group discussions and the issues on which I should focus. It was also useful to reframe the interview questions I developed. Despite this opportunity, although I knew that it was open for all students (*yeabnät tämariwoc*) to participate in the dialogues without any requirements, I worried whether it was ethical to record their voices prior to obtaining informed consent. However, in these cases, the institution-based (e.g., Norwegian Centre for Research Data) standards and procedures for obtaining consent and generating knowledge may not be applicable.

Using my personal network, I carried out four informal conversations with the elderly, which gave rise to a grounded understanding of the religious content of indigenous Ethiopian education and the problem of shifting to secular teaching on children's identity and their future lives. They had experiences with ancient Ethiopian education and were knowledgeable about the history of the country and the changes in the moral values of children and young people in present-day societies. I found the discussions with them useful as it gave me insights to examine why modern schooling lacks indigenous direction and how this affects the aspirations that children construct.

4.4.4.5 YouTube as Data Source

We live in the age of digital technologies, wherein people are unprecedentedly using social media such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Skype, blogs, and so forth. They are social networking sites where people build social relationships and are platforms through which people enter the public sphere while sharing their personal perspectives and experiences (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018). Employing YouTube as a source of information in ethnographic research is relatively new (Giglietto et al., 2012; Patterson, 2018). In the context of this study, Sheger 102.1 FM radio's "*Yech'äwata ängda*" (conversation with a guest) program, which is the first Ethiopian private FM radio station established in September 2007, and YouTube videos under the heading *Wäqtawi godayoch* (current issues) shared by *Mahbärä Qäddusan* (Association in the Name of the Saints) were used as sources of information about the reasons why modern schooling in Ethiopia lacks a national objective, how it should be reimagined to respond to children's aspirations and prospects, and the spiritual and indigenous knowledge heritage protection movements in the country.

Although it is a fact that the radio program recordings and the association's videos on YouTube were uploaded and shared with the knowledge that they are publicly available to everyone, I proceeded to use them as data sources after obtaining consent from the owner and some of the participants, with whom I also had face-to-face personal

interviews. Because the opinions and ideas of people who have been invited as guests to "Yech'äwata ängda" (conversation with a guest) and "Wäqtawi gudayoch" (current issues) programs are accessible to the public, I initially thought that applying the ethical principles, in this case, would be non-functional and have no impact on them. However, I understood that it would have ethical implications, as they requested that I send them the findings to be reviewed to see if their points were adequately represented and interpreted in the video.

4.4.5 Method of Analysis, Matching Matrix and Triangulation

4.4.5.1 Method of Analysis and Procedure

In this study, indigenous methodologies, namely *Tërgwame* and *Hatäta*, which are exegetical traditions of the Ethiopian Orthodox *Täwahädo* Church (Alehegne, 2012; Ježek, 2022; Workneh, 1970) and have been serving as methods of preserving and transforming spiritual knowledge heritages in the church, were employed as methods of analysis. They were developed in Ethiopian *Guba Bets* (Indigenous church schools) (Ježek, 2022; Workneh, 1970). As Ježek (2022, p. 12, *italic added*) noted, they are neglected and "underappreciated or misunderstood by universally applied rules of knowledge production systems because there is an a priori rejection based on logic, rationality, or comprehension." As a result, they have not previously been used in ethnographic research inquiring about meanings in transcripts of participants' perspectives by situating them in the local indigenous Ethiopian context, which may make the current study unique.

It should be noted that I do not claim to have used these methods in the same way they were employed in indigenous Ethiopian church schools, which use dogmatic doctrines and canonicals of the faith in orthodox Christianity. Any kind of interpretation and explanations against this are invalid. Instead, I attempted to cross the boundary and apply the processes used in analysing the perspectives and practices of the study participants in relation to familial, spiritual, socio-political, cultural, and economic contexts of the country and beyond.

Tërgwame 'is a process that searches for meaning by focusing on the multiplicity, intention, irony, and beauty of a given text' (Woldeyes, 2017, p. 80). It is a meaning-giving method by which *yeabnät tämariwoc* (students) learn how to generate meanings and make sense out of the existing text attaching different interpretations (Alehegne, 2012; Ježek, 2022; Workneh, 1970). They acquire knowledge how to examine the underlying realities and how historical and indigenous contexts shape the meaning of the text. *Tërgwame* is also practiced in social arenas in the form of, for instance, *Säm äna wäraq* (wax and gold) and *änoqlsh mn äwäqälsh* (allegorical puzzles) (Ježek, 2022; Woldeyes, 2017). It has been outlined that there are at least three forms of *Tërgwame* namely *Andämta Tërgwame* (interpretation by alternatives), *Nätäla tërgwame* (the direct literal meaning), and *Mëstir tërgwame* (interpretation of the mystery or idiomatic interpretation) (Alehegne, 2012; Ježek, 2022; Pedersen, 1995; Workneh, 1970). Out of these, I tried to employ *Andämta Tërgwame* (interpretation by alternatives) in this study and used the word *Andämta* ("Another says") to draw alternative interpretations to transcripts of children's and other participants' perspectives and experiences.

Hatäta, on the other hand, is "a philosophical method for the possible fashioning of human experience through the practice of critical inquiry" (Woldeyes, 2017, p. 92). Kiros

(1996) noted that *Hatäta* is a method of inquiry in which an explanation is offered for a given text or phenomenon through a careful examination of the text and the illustration of various concepts and terminologies that help to create meaning and understand the underlying realities, referring to the works of Zär'a Ya'eqob, who was one of the *yeabnät tämariwoc* (students) and the late noted Ethiopian philosopher in the 17th century. In the context of this study, the transcripts were examined with the tools of commentary explanations in which the perspectives of the participants were located in the local indigenous Ethiopian contexts—educational policies and historic-political, spiritual, social, and economic conditions. This was done with the premise that the meanings we generate out of people's perspectives and experiences are not only subjective to individual interpretations but also subjected to commentary explanations and logically connected to these contexts.

In the analysis, I used several important steps. First, I generated a large amount of qualitative data by transcribing and translating the audiotape-recorded interviews from Amharic to English. However, finding equivalent English words for some of the interviewees' concepts, terms, and ideas was time-consuming, but I made sure to capture their ideas properly in the verbatim transcripts. Second, I read through each transcript and used *Andämta Tërgwame* to construct possible meanings or alternative interpretations conveyed by the participants in light of the research questions, using the word *Andäm* ("Another says"). Then, I identified the main and sub-themes and examined their logical connectivity. Third, after completing *Andämta Tërgwame* and identifying themes, I used *Hatäta* to provide commentary, explanations, and contextual interpretations of the participants' views, situating them in the larger social milieu and personal experiences in which they were expressed. Finally, I triangulated the data obtained from children and adult participants through different methods. I conducted a detailed discussion of the findings in light of the theoretical frameworks in concepts and theories (see Chapter 3) and provided my critical reflections.

4.4.5.2 Triangulation and Matching Matrix

To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the analysis, I utilized a variety of data sources including semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), informal dialogue, imaginative drawings, and YouTube. I integrated these sources to triangulate the qualitative findings and provide a comprehensive understanding of the research questions. To accomplish this, I carefully selected and analysed data from each source in a way that complemented and reinforced the others. I also utilized theoretical perspectives that were relevant to the research questions to interpret the findings. For clarity, Table 4.1 presents the research questions, along with the types of research participants, and the methods used for data collection and analysis. This helps to provide an overview of the research design and methodology, as well as the different data sources that were used to answer the research questions.

Research Questions	Research Participants	Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis Methods
what does indigenous education imply to children, parents, <i>Yenetas</i> (head teachers), church scholars, schoolteachers, elderly people and education policy makers?	children, parents, <i>Yenetas</i> (head teachers), church scholars, schoolteachers, elderly people and education policy makers	semi-structured interviews focus group discussions (FGDs) informal dialogue YouTube as data source	<i>Tėrgwame</i> and <i>Hatāta</i> with a follow-up inductive coding
how indigenous education is linked/respond to children's aspirations and futures?	parents, <i>Yenetas</i> (head teachers), church scholars, schoolteachers, elderly people and education policy makers	semi-structured interviews informal dialogue YouTube as data source	<i>Tėrgwame</i> and <i>Hatāta</i> with a follow-up inductive coding
why do children value indigenous education in relation to their aspirations and future?	children parents	semi-structured interviews individual imaginative drawings with children	<i>Tėrgwame</i> and <i>Hatāta</i> with a follow-up inductive coding
how do children make sense of their futures where their aspirations and expectations are negotiated with parents, schools, and the changing of educational polices?	children, parents, <i>Yenetas</i> (head teachers), church scholars, schoolteachers, elderly people and education policy makers	semi-structured interviews focus group discussions (FGDs) informal dialogue YouTube as data source	<i>Tėrgwame</i> and <i>Hatāta</i> with a follow-up inductive coding

Table 4. 1: Matching matrix of research questions, research participants and data collection methods

4.4.6 Ethical Considerations and the Dilemmas

Childhood research involves a variety of challenges, including the need to understand the lives of children, engage with them, and navigate ethical dilemmas that may arise during the research process (see Abebe, 2009; Canosa et al., 2018). Additionally, it is important to protect children from any unethical practices or procedures and avoid potential threats that may arise during the research process. In the present study, ethical considerations were given high priority throughout the research process, but putting these principles into practice presented some practical challenges and dilemmas.

While there are universal ethical principles that should be followed in all research involving children, the local cultural context also plays an important role in determining how these principles should be applied (see Abebe, 2009; Morrow & Richards, 1996; Murphy & Dingwall, 2007; Tangwa, 2003). I found it challenging to determine how much weight to give to local cultural convictions versus ethical principles when making decisions throughout the research process. Despite these challenges, I made every effort to ensure that the research was conducted in an ethical and respectful manner, and I believe that my findings are a valuable contribution to the field of childhood research.

4.4.6.1 Access and Consent Procedure

Undoubtedly, conducting ethnographic fieldwork requires negotiation and commitment from various stakeholders, each with their own interests and expectations that can impact the research process and outcomes in positive or negative ways (De Laine, 2000; Skovdal & Abebe, 2012). (De Laine, 2000; Skovdal & Abebe, 2012). Despite my insider position, I was unable to access the *yeabnät tāmariwoc* (students) without first explaining the purpose, methods, and significance of my research to the *Yenetas* (headteachers) who acted as the primary gatekeepers and facilitated negotiations for student participation. I assured them that my research was purely academic and not subversive in nature, but rather a project intended to partially fulfil the requirements for a master's degree in childhood studies.

Although they treated me respectfully, the *Yenetas* (headteachers) initially responded passively and suspected, albeit not overtly, that I would evaluate their performance. At times, they expressed concerns that the research would not add value to indigenous Ethiopian church education unless it was implemented. This kind of attitude often arises when people feel that previous research in which they participated did not bring about any positive changes. After extensive discussion, I gained their trust, and they informed me that they would actively engage in the project.

It is crucial to consider the potential consequences of obtaining consent without parental involvement. Obtaining consent without parental involvement may strain the relationship between the parent and child and may also have legal implications. Parents have the right to be involved in their children's lives and decisions that may affect them. In the context of this study, headteachers were authorized to act on behalf of the child's parents in matters related to educational activities, such as providing consent for school-related activities. I observed that the level of trust among the parents was high, as they expressed faith in the headteachers when deciding their children's participation in the research. Consequently, the parents adhered to the headteachers' responses and agreed with their decisions about their children's participation. In other research settings, the

scope of a teacher's authority may be limited, and they may not be able to provide consent on behalf of the child for matters outside of their educational duties.

To prioritize the safety and well-being of the children, the consent obtained from them was informed and voluntary. Since the *Yenetas* (headteachers) held a position of authority over their students, it may have been difficult for students to refuse their request for consent. Therefore, to address this concern, I asked them during the research process about their right to withdraw from participating at any point for whatever reason that may be while they were not feeling well (see also Skovdal & Abebe, 2012). Yet, as a sign of respect and love to follow the *Yenetas'* (headteachers') orders, they expressed interest in participating. Showing obedience to the *Yenetas* (headteachers) is one of the norms that *yeabnät tämariwoc* (students) follow in Ethiopian Indigenous Church Schools, and it is seen as a blessing. The support letters from the Department of Educational and Lifelong Learning at NTNU, the Department of Sociology at AAU, as well as the ethical clearance consisting of information sheets and consent forms from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) were not given much attention by the *Yenetas* (headteachers), parents, and *yeabnät tämariwoc* (students). My insider position and the trust I had gained from them played a significant role. As a result, I felt ashamed to ask them to sign the consent form, fearing that they might lose trust in me or feel forced to comply.

In addition, I contacted a group of church scholars via text messages and emails. I made sure to share my identity and explain why I needed to talk to them. Unfortunately, they did not respond to my initial messages and emails. Thankfully, I had some personal networks that allowed me to obtain their cell phone and email addresses. I persisted in trying to reach them, but still no response. Eventually, I decided to call them directly, and after several days of trying, they finally picked up the phone. During our conversation, I explained the purpose of my call and the subject I wished to discuss. To my delight, they expressed a keen interest in what I had to say and scheduled a meeting with me. At the meeting, I presented the necessary documentation, including letters, information sheets, and consent forms. Although they initially weren't too eager to read through the documents, they asked me to explain the purpose of my research and what I expected from them. They were kind and understanding, and I was able to obtain their consent without any issues. To avoid any suspicion about why I had chosen them to participate in the research, I explained that I had listened to their conversations as guests on popular media programs, including "*Yech'awata engda*" (conversation with a guest) and "*Wäqtawi gudayoch*" (current issues) of Sheger Café radio and *Mahebarä Qedusan* television programs. In the end, my persistence paid off, and I was able to secure the support of these knowledgeable church scholars. Their input was invaluable to my research and I was, and still am, grateful for the opportunity to learn from them.

4.4.6.2 Harms and Reciprocity

The research conducted was guided by the highest ethical standards, which aimed to prevent any harm or negative consequences that participants may face as a result of their involvement in the research process. To achieve this, the participants' anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained. Furthermore, it was crucial to treat the participants with dignity, ensuring that no interview questions would provoke negative feelings.

During the research, it was observed that some children felt uncomfortable if their imaginative drawings were exposed to others. As a result, their anonymity was carefully

guarded. Similarly, many adult participants were cautious when discussing educational policies linked to the government's political ideology. However, some individuals expressed their views openly and criticized the former leading Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPDRF) and its successor, the Prosperity Party. They accused these political parties of unfairly blaming the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tāwahādo* Church and its knowledge heritage for the country's underdevelopment. Expressing such views can be risky, leading to potential conflicts with the government, and even legal action. Therefore, it was of utmost importance to safeguard the participants' identities and ensure their protection during and after the research process.

Throughout the research project, participants were eager to understand the significance of sharing their views with the researcher. Yenetas, or headteachers, and elderly individuals hoped that the research findings would be disseminated to academic communities who may not be familiar with Indigenous Ethiopian Church Schools and their role in the country. Moreover, these participants expressed a strong desire for the researcher to uncover the knowledge treasures found within the Church and make them accessible to anyone, regardless of their religious background. Church scholars emphasized the importance of returning to ancient sources of knowledge and passing them on to future generations, with the current study being viewed as an opportunity to contribute to this mission.

In addition, parents were interested in receiving recommendations on how to enable their children to excel in both Church education and modern schooling, with a view to enhancing their future employment opportunities. Furthermore, participants recognized the need to address the negative effects of modern schooling on children's behaviour and identities. Although some of these issues exceeded the scope of the research project, I took proactive measures to address them, such as initiating a campaign and creating a dialogue page on their Facebook account. The researcher also taught immigrant Ethiopian and Eritrean children in Norway about indigenous education and organized sessions with their parents to discuss the benefits of such education and what was expected of them.

The participants' eagerness to share their views reflects a deep-rooted desire to promote indigenous education and its invaluable knowledge, while the parents' concerns highlight the need for an education system that effectively prepares children for future success. My proactive measures to address these concerns demonstrate a commitment to positively impact the community beyond the research project, ensuring that the findings of the research are used to improve the educational opportunities and experiences of future generations.

4.4.6.3 Privacy and Confidentiality

Research involving children raises important ethical considerations related to privacy and confidentiality (Bryman & Bell, 2019). In the context of this study, I undertook several measures to protect the privacy and confidentiality of both child and adult participants from any potential risks incurred by their participation. I obtained informed consent from the participants, including the children themselves, explaining the purpose of the research, the procedures involved, and the benefits of participation. They were made aware of what information would be collected and how it would be used. Although I originally planned to use specific details that identified the participants upon their consent, they were not willing, so I removed identifying information from the data collected from children, such as their Gubae Bets (Indigenous schools) to protect their privacy. This ensured that the data could not be linked back to individual children. Since

they did not agree to make their accounts identifiable, I replaced identifying information with pseudonyms to protect the children's identities while still allowing the data to be linked back to them for analysis purposes. If they agreed to make them identifiable, this could have presented an ethical dilemma.

The confidentiality of all participants, including children, was maintained throughout the study. Nonetheless, there were instances where child participants allowed other young children who were not part of the research to see what they were drawing and the description they gave to it. However, I limited access to the data collected from children to my supervisor only, ensuring that the data was not shared with anyone who did not have a legitimate reason to access it. I also used password-protected files to protect the data from unauthorized access.

4.4.6.4 Power Differentials

In any research study involving human participants, power dynamics are an important ethical consideration (Abebe, 2009; Collier, 2019; De Laine, 2000; Gallagher, 2008). This is particularly true in child-focused research, where researchers must navigate complex power relations between themselves and the children they are studying. Many researchers have recognized the importance of minimizing their power in child-focused research and have employed various strategies to do so. One example is Corsaro's (1996) use of the term atypical adult, which seeks to reduce the sense of hierarchy between adults and children. Another strategy involves participating in children's activities as a way to build rapport and reduce power imbalances (Abebe, 2009).

However, the effectiveness of these strategies is context-dependent and must be negotiated. It is also important to consider whether power dynamics always serve as a barrier to obtaining information from children. In the research settings of this study, disclosing my background and status seemed to encourage participants to share information. However, I am not sure that disclosing my status influenced their responses to the questions I asked them. Therefore, building trust and mutual respect between children and myself helped to create a safe space for them to share their perspectives and experiences, and this was likely the most critical factor in obtaining accurate and meaningful information from them.

It is common for researchers to feel powerless at certain points during the research process, but this situation is often overlooked. Personally, I found that I felt more at ease while interviewing children than when interviewing other participants. In some cases, I chose to skip personal questions with adult participants when I sensed they were uncomfortable or unwilling to discuss them. Despite this, there were still instances where I felt powerless, particularly when I was unable to access certain participants for an interview.

4.4.6.5 Inclusion and Representation

In research, it's essential to include, recognize, and represent the voices and experiences of study participants (Wyness, 2013). These aspects become particularly important during the translation, mediation, and interpretation stages of the research process. The study included children, Yenetas (headteachers), parents, church scholars, schoolteachers, and elderly people who were enrolled in both Indigenous Ethiopian Church schools and modern schooling. There were no other specific inclusion criteria for their participation. However, a participant from the Ministry of Education (MoE) was not required to fulfil this criterion. This was because, unlike church scholars, I did not have a

large sampling pool in the ministry with backgrounds in these school systems, making it difficult to select an appropriate candidate.

I found that the most important methods used in the study were imaginative drawings, informal dialogue, and semi-structured techniques that actively engaged children and encouraged them to share their opinions. It is worth noting that these methods did not exclude any children from participating, although the level of capacity of the children varied. However, since they had limited research experience in group conversations, they were initially passive in responding to the issues raised for discussion. I also observed a sense of shyness among the children as they checked their friends' reactions to their responses, possibly indicating a feeling of inadequacy in addressing the issue.

Qualitative research analysis is often challenged by the risk of under- or overrepresentation of participants' accounts (Bryman & Bell, 2019; Wyness, 2013). In this study, I employed two strategies to ensure adequate representation of participants' perspectives. Firstly, I transcribed their verbal accounts and used an Amharic-English dictionary to translate them. However, I found that some words and phrases did not fully capture the meanings and expressions of what the participants described. To address this issue, I provided a further explanation in the form of *hatäta*, using both the Amharic and English versions of their statements. Secondly, I engaged the *Mahḥärä Qəddusan* (Association in the Name of the Saints) in reviewing the findings of the research. Since they had experience working with *yeabnät tämariwoc* (students) and I had promised to send them the results of the study during the building of trust, the association reviewed the findings to ensure that the participants through which I accessed were adequately represented. In addition, the *Mahḥärä Qəddusan* showed a keen interest in disseminating the research findings through their research center, which not only broadened and deepened its accountability but also increased the sense of ownership among local stakeholders, as argued by Van Blerk and Ansell (2007).

4.5 Summary

This chapter described the research methodology used in detail in a study. The study used the relativist participatory paradigm, which acknowledged child and adult participants as the subjects and co-generators of knowledge. Participants were recruited using purposeful and snowball sampling, with the criteria being experienced in both Indigenous Ethiopian church education and modern schooling. Critical reflexivity was used as a tool to assess the relationship between the researcher and the participants, and to reflect on the merits and demerits of the researcher's insider position. The main methods used to collect data were semi-structured interviewing, focus group discussion (FGD), imaginative drawings, informal dialogue, and YouTube. The methods of analysis used were *Tərgwame* and *Hatäta*, and the data produced was triangulated to show that the methods and data complemented each other.

In this chapter I also noted that protecting the privacy of children in research involves a combination of mechanisms, including informed consent, data anonymization and pseudonymization, limited access to data, secure data storage, and ethical approval from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). These mechanisms ensure that the children's privacy is respected, and their participation in the research is ethical and responsible. However, some ethical issues were locally negotiated, considering the cultural milieu and personal experiences of the participants.

Chapter 5: Participants' Discourses of Modern Schooling and The Primacy of *Yeabnät* (Indigenous) Education

5.1 Introduction

As explained in the introduction chapter, my research questions were: What does indigenous education imply for children, parents, Yenetas (head teachers), church scholars, schoolteachers, elderly people, and education policymakers? Why do children value indigenous education in relation to their aspirations and future? How do children differentiate and harness indigenous for their aspirations and futures? And, how do children make sense of their futures where their aspirations are negotiated with parents and the changing of educational policies? This chapter aims to provide a deeper look into the first three objectives; the last one will be examined in the upcoming chapter (Chapter 6).

Drawing on Sankofa and postcolonial theories (as discussed in Chapter 3), I take as my starting point the notion that Western-style schooling is inherently politically rooted in particular traditions, and that it has led to an abrupt change in Ethiopia's indigenous education system. This highlights a growing need to rethink schooling in a way that is relevant to Ethiopian children's aspirations and futures. As we will see, the perspectives of children and other participants are described. To this end, I introduce some characteristics of *Yeabnät Tämariwoc* (students) and their parents and then recount the experiences of *Yeabnät Tämariwoc* (students). Following this, I examine the meanings that participants attach to indigenous education. Next, I explain the competing views about the roots of modern schooling held by the participants and then delve into their critiques of modern schooling. Finally, I explore the challenges of integrating modern schooling with indigenous education and the implications for the future aspirations of *Yeabnät Tämariwoc* (students).

5.2 Some Socio-Demographic Characteristics of *Yeabnät Tämariwoc* (Students) and their Parents

As shown in Table 5.1, I observed children's age, gender, and educational status in both formal schooling and *Yeabnät* (indigenous) education. The students' ages ranged from 9 to 15 years old, with two girls aged 9 and 11 enrolled in primary school and also attending the *Nebab-Bet* (School of Reading) of *Yeabnät* education. Their parents had attained the highest level of education from universities and were knowledgeable in *Nebab-Bet* (the school of reading) of the *Ge'ez* scriptures and *Qene-Bet* (the school of poetry), which is one of the highest forms of knowledge in indigenous education where they learned about philosophies, histories, alternative worldviews, and evaluating forms of knowledge. The parents' source of income was a monthly salary from the government (see Table 5.1).

The remaining 6 boys were aged between 9 and 15, with two of them being the same age. Two boys were in primary school (grades 1-6), while the others were in middle

school (grades 7-8). Except for 2 boys who were on their way to joining the Qene-Bet (school of poetry), the others were in the Nebab-Bet (school of reading). The boys' parents were in Qedassie-Bet (the school of liturgy) and Zema-Bet (the school of hymns), and their sources of income were a monthly salary from the government and self-employment as consultants. All the parents had master's degrees (see Table 5.1 below).

This description indicates that although both male and female students were referred to as children, there was age variation among them. As a result, there may be differences in their responses to the questions, as age tends to be associated with children's experiences. Furthermore, although some students were in the same school grade, they had different levels of achievement in Yeabnät education. There may be differences in how they explain how indigenous education shapes their future prospects. Here, the term child is based on The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), which entered into force in 1999 found in the age group from 0-18 years. using the term for the age group 0-18 years (AU, 1999).

Similarly, the parents' level of knowledge in indigenous Ethiopian church education may be associated with the level of influence they have on their children's aspirations.

Age of the Child	Gender of the Child	Child's Educational Level in Schooling	Child's Educational Level in Indigenous Education	Parent's Educational Level in Schooling	Parent's Educational Level in Indigenous Education	Parent's Source (s) of Making a Living
9	Girl	Primary School (1-6 Grades)	<i>Nebab-Bet</i> (School of Reading)	Higher Education (Postgraduate)	<i>Nebab-Bet</i> (School of Reading), Beginner	Salary from Government
9	Boy	Primary School (1-6 Grades)	<i>Nebab-Bet</i> (School of Reading)	Higher Education (Postgraduate)	<i>Nebab-Bet</i> (School of Reading)	Income from Self-employed (Consultancy)
11	Girl	Primary School (1-6 Grades)	<i>Nebab-Bet</i> (School of Reading)	Higher Education (Postgraduate)	<i>Qene-Bet</i> (School of Poetry)	Salary from Government
12	Boy	Primary School (1-6 Grades)	<i>Nebab-Bet</i> (School of Reading)	Higher Education (Postgraduate)	<i>Qedassie-Bet</i> (School of Liturgy)	Salary from NGO
14	Boy	Primary and Middle School (7 & 8 Grade)	<i>Nebab-Bet</i> (School of Reading)	Higher Education (Postgraduate)	<i>Zema-Bet</i> (School of Hymn)	Salary from Government
13	Boy	Primary and Middle School (7 & 8 Grade)	<i>Nebab-Bet</i> (School of Reading)	<i>Missing Data*</i>	<i>Missing Data*</i>	<i>Missing Data*</i>
13	Boy	Primary and Middle School (7 & 8 Grade)	<i>Nebab-Bet</i> (School of Reading) & in the way to join <i>Qene-Bet</i> (School of Poetry)	<i>Missing Data*</i>	<i>Missing Data*</i>	<i>Missing Data*</i>
15	Boy	-	<i>Qene-Bet</i> (School of Poetry)	<i>Missing Data*</i>	<i>Missing Data*</i>	<i>Missing Data*</i>

Table 5. 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of yeabnät tämariwoc and their parents

* I did not obtain the data for three parents as I could not access them (see Methodology Chapter for details).

5.3 *Yeabnät Tämariwoc (Students')* Experiences of the *Yeabnät* (Indigenous) Education

Children's definitions of schooling and indigenous education, as well as ways of differentiating them, are partly interconnected with their life experiences. This section examines the experiences of *yeabnät tāmariwoc* (students, plural) by exploring why they developed an interest in attending *yeabnät* (indigenous) education, with whom they first came into contact, and how they explained it. These questions are important to unpack their views about what distinguishes indigenous education from schooling.

5.3.1 Exemplifying Educated Elites of Priest

Most students (*yeabnät tāmariwoc*) envision their lives through learning roles from those who have achieved success in their lives and are acknowledged by others for their accomplishments. This process of learning from role models shapes their aspirations. The following excerpt demonstrates this:

I believe that a person who has undergone *yeabnät* (indigenous) education possesses a broad mind. Such individuals are equipped with knowledge of both the spiritual and non-spiritual worlds, making them uniquely knowledgeable. When I see people who have learned *yeabnät*, when I see I wished I had the ability towards their achievements and success in both domains. (Ewunet, a 15-year-old boy)

A student (*yeabnät tāmari*, singular) from Dagmawi Menelik Metasebiya Guba-Bet, who attends the indigenous school, expressed a similar idea that closely resembles the above.

When I saw the fathers who had achieved a higher academic level in indigenous education, and those individuals who were educated in a modern school but also highly knowledgeable in *yeabnät* (indigenous) education, I developed a keen interest in coming here to learn. (Fkr, a 13-year-old boy)

As these quotes indicate, acquiring knowledge from Gubae-Bets (indigenous schools) and modern schooling and succeeding in both worlds can earn individuals' recognition from others and assign them a high social status. In Ethiopia, education is highly valued, and attaining the highest level of schooling is considered a promising stage toward self-reliance and ability to help others (Pankhurst, 1955, as cited in Kebede, 2020). As the quote also suggests, children are not only inspired by elites who succeed in modern schooling but also by those who have graduated from both modern schooling and indigenous education. I have also observed that many recent university graduates and employed professionals, such as medical doctors, engineers, lawyers, bank accountants, and others, attend evening programs at Guba Bets (indigenous schools) to continue their education.

5.3.2 The Counsel of Significant Others

The peer group to which children belong, and through which they develop a sense of intimacy, share their views, and contribute to each other (Corsaro, 2011; Corsaro & Eder, 1990), was another important factor that led child participants to attend *yeabnät* (indigenous) education. In connection with this, a student (*yeabnät tāmari*, singular) from Dagmawi Menelik Metasebiya Guba Bet (Emperor Menelik II Memorial indigenous school) in Addis Ababa explains who told him about this indigenous school and why he continues to learn.

I used to attend Sunday school at church until a friend invited me to join *yeabnät* (indigenous) education. At the time, I had no idea what it was about. But my friend explained the different subjects and their significance in life, which sparked my interest. As

I continued to attend classes, my knowledge grew day by day, and I found myself increasingly drawn to this unique form of education. Today, I am still here, continuing to learn and grow. (Thtna, a 13-year-old boy)

5.4 Participants' Understanding of Indigenous Education

Indeed, ethnographic accounts of how children experienced education in yeabnät (indigenous) schools are important to examine how they define indigenous education and differentiate it from modern education. Taking this view, this section examines what indigenous education implies to child participants and other stakeholders, such as parents, Yenetas (headteachers), church scholars, schoolteachers, elderly people, and education policymakers, who directly or indirectly shape children's present lives and visions of the past and the future.

A 12-year-old student (yeabnät tämari) from YeNazretu Eyesus Gubae Bet (Jesus of Nazareth indigenous school) in Adama provided his perspective on modern education and indigenous education. According to him, modern education refers to the education obtained in school, while yeabnät education is focused on instilling moral values and preparing for heavenly rewards. He explained that indigenous education encompasses teachings and practices that enable one to become a deacon and a spiritual individual. Another student (yeabnät tämari) from the same indigenous school provided a more detailed description of indigenous education, which is shown in the following excerpt.

Modern schooling emphasizes technology and new inventions, which were not available to ancient people but are now expanding rapidly and providing new learning opportunities for children and youth. In contrast, indigenous education focuses on helping children and youth express gratitude to the Lord, love their faith in Him, avoid criminal behavior, develop good relationships with others, and cultivate a close relationship with God. Indigenous education provides training to help achieve these goals. (Knnnet, a 11-year-old girl)

As the above quote indicates, the student (yeabnät tämari) believes that modern education emerged through technological advancements that introduced new ways of learning and knowing. However, she considers indigenous education as maturity in religious beliefs or ways of organizing lives through such beliefs. She conceives of indigenous education in terms of its role in preventing unlawful acts, facilitating social interactions, and promoting love and respect for God. This implicitly suggests that modern education lacks these qualities and even excludes religion from the discussion.

Elleni Tedla's book, *Sankofa: African Thought and Education*, reflects similar accounts using the African and Western dichotomy. Tedla argues that African and Western concepts of education are at odds with each other, particularly in terms of their attitudes towards communal and societal values. The Western model prioritizes individual achievement, asserting that any benefits to society from individual success are merely a by-product. Conversely, the African perspective maintains that an individual's prosperity is intrinsically linked to the well-being of the community, with individual needs and community needs being mutually reflective. As a result, the discrepancies between these two worldviews often lead to clashes between the colonial governments' educational policies and the aspirations of Africans (Tedla, 1995). However, her argument may overlook the conviction that God is the source of social values and norms, which was repeatedly noted by study participants as defining indigenous education, as the upcoming discussions also reveal.

An 11-year-old student (yeabnät tämari) argued that indigenous education is "the traditional Ethiopian knowledge that has been transmitted through generations. In contrast, modern education has developed gradually over time and has been introduced

from outside Ethiopia." This shows the importance of the geographical dimension or imagination in distinguishing indigenous from modern education. Yet, the difference between them is not limited to the geographical variables because the concept of indigenous could also be defined with non-geographical but historical and situational factors.

One of the church scholars noted that indigenous education "serves not only our material needs but also nourishes our body and soul," in contrast to schooling. This view corresponds to the opinions of students (yeabnät tämariwoc) who emphasized the social and spiritual benefits of indigenous education. The scholar also discussed the unintended consequences of relying solely on schooling, stating that "a country that simply follows and imitates others may appear to have grown, but it is vulnerable to collapse from even minor setbacks." This suggests that knowledge and practices that exist outside of one's tradition do not have lasting value. The scholar emphasized that "no nation can develop solely through borrowed knowledge; while it may show short-term development, its lifespan is limited." This highlights the importance of indigenous education for societal progress. Similar views are also found in decolonial theories, which advocate for the resurgence of indigenous education and practices as the foundation of societies whose ways of knowing and doing are decentred from the education system (Connell, 2014; Istratii & Lewis, 2019; Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018).

An elderly participant started with the view that "education is not just about preparing for life; it is life itself." This quote implicitly indicates that education is not merely a system to prepare children for their future lives, but for their present lives as well. Another participant suggests that it shows that education and life are inextricably intertwined, and that a simplistic understanding of their relationship is misleading. A third participant suggests that education goes beyond the acquisition of knowledge and involves living knowledge that children use in their daily lives. He accords the highest value to indigenous knowledge, stating that it "has the power to generate new forms of knowledge that we may have lost in the past." However, he also suggests a co-integration model approach as a valuable tool for comprehending the intricate relationships between various types of knowledge.

The issue of integration between modern and indigenous forms of knowledge is a matter of debate in both policy and academic spheres. A considerably detailed discussion on this matter is provided in chapter two of the present study. Two dialectical views were raised and discussed by the study participants.

With this in mind, a fresh outlook about the concept of indigenous education was suggested by the church scholar who was also the director of National Archives and Library of Ethiopia. He argues that:

The Ethiopian alphabet and the reading style are indigenous. However, there are texts in Ethiopian church education that are Christian texts that were written by Christians in Ethiopia and outside Ethiopia. Therefore, these texts are indigenous in terms of the language, which is Ge'ez, in which they are written but international in terms of their contents. There are texts only about Ethiopia's context written in Ge'ez, and the contents are indigenous. For example, Zema (chanting) and Qene (poetry) are only found in Ethiopia and are unique in the history of Christianity in the world. So, both the text and the content are indigenous. Here, I would like to add the point that texts about Ethiopia written in another language, for example, Latin, could be considered indigenous. Thus, the meaning of indigenous education is determined based on the language in which it is written and the contents it has. (Yikunoamlak)

In this brief extract, it seems that the interviewee is using language and content as criteria to distinguish between indigenous and non-indigenous knowledge. The use of the Ge'ez language and content related to Ethiopia is considered indigenous knowledge. On the other hand, if the content is not related to Ethiopia, or if a foreign language is used, it is categorized as non-indigenous knowledge. To put it another way, if the text is written in Ge'ez and the content is about Ethiopia, it is indigenous. If the text is written in Ge'ez but the content is not about Ethiopia, it is still indigenous. If the text is written in foreign languages but the content is about Ethiopia, it is also indigenous. If the text is written in a foreign language and the content is not about Ethiopia, it is non-indigenous as depicted in Table 5.2 below. This suggests that the interviewee is emphasizing the importance of context and cultural specificity in defining indigenous knowledge.

Language of the Text	Ethiopian Content	Non-Ethiopian Content
Ge'ez	Indigenous (Unique)	Indigenous
Foreign Language	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous

Table 5. 2: Language type, content form, and the concept of indigenous

What is perhaps most distinctive about this kind of conception of indigenous knowledge is that it challenges studies (e.g., Seehawer & Breidlid, 2021) that conceive indigenous knowledge as geographically confined ways of knowing and doing. Here, I can make a point that indigenous knowledge can also be understood as a return to the past, bringing all knowledge, philosophies, and practices that are important for making a living for children's present and future lives. Yet, this point may be seen by some as glorifying and romanticizing the past, which is not the case. One of the interviews also noted that "returning to indigenous education is not simply romanticizing it, but rather recognizing its value and importance in our society."

In addition, in the current political discourse along ethnic lines in the country, there is what I call a 'return to the source vacuum', meaning that there are groups of elites who condemn the knowledge heritages of the past and want to exclude them from educational systems. However, the concept of indigenous education may not be well understood without tracing historical facts and knowledge treasures.

Relatedly, I posed the question to church scholars and elderly individuals about the claim of considering any knowledge heritages in the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwāḥədo Church as indigenous, given that Christianity began in Jerusalem, Israel. They began their explanation by noting that although Christianity became the official religion of the Aksumite kingdom in the fourth century, it was already known in Ethiopia for a long time. They pointed out that a eunuch from Queen Candace's court in Ethiopia had travelled to Jerusalem to worship the God of Israel and was baptized by Philip the Deacon, as stated in Acts of the Apostles, VIII: 26–40. According to Ethiopian legend, the eunuch returned home and spread the word of God, and many books were translated into Ge'ez and arranged in a way that retained their original essence but fit the Ethiopian context. They argued that the knowledge and spiritual treasures that exist in these books are indigenous.

Furthermore, they noted that church scholars added Ethiopian elements to these books without altering their dogmatic and canonical content, and they were communicated to

the people in ways that were native to them. This was another dimension they emphasized in claiming that the education provided in the church is indigenous.

In a similar vein, a schoolteacher strongly stated that “all values of Christianity, without changes in their content and disintegration, were only found in Ethiopia from day one of the creation of the earth. Therefore, if it is not indigenous to Ethiopia, it would not be found anywhere in the world.” This implies that preserving and maintaining meaningful knowledge for people’s lives over time makes it indigenous. Here, the time dimension was considered as the main criterion to characterize a particular knowledge as indigenous.

Echoing the responses of the participants above, I argue that the concept of indigenous education is not only a matter of geographical and cultural contexts, but it is also subject to historical and temporal dimensions. With this in mind, in what follows, I will examine the views of the participants on modern education and its distinctive attributes, which make it different from indigenous education in the study areas.

5.5 Participant’s Perspectives on Modern Schooling

Before considering the fallouts of modern education, it is worth exploring the perspectives of children and other study participants about its source. Thus, I zoom in on competing views of the source of modern education. Then, taking this a step forward, I examine how the aspirations of children for the future through indigenous education are produced and materially realized in the follow-up section of the present Chapter.

5.5.1 Perspectives on Source of Modern Schooling: Competing Views?

In this study, the source of modern education was a point of debate among participants, and these debates offer one way to claim modern education as originally Ethiopian. There was debate between those who see modern education as an Ethiopian phenomenon and those who argue that it is the phenomena of Western world. The former contradicts with what is historically documented that modern education is a Western phenomenon. I found it a fresh idea important to push forward the discourse on education in country. I examine these competing arguments.

5.5.1.1 ‘Alien to the People’

During the interviews, schoolteachers revealed unease that modern education was alien. One of them started his argument historicizing modern education and noted that modern education in Europe has only a history of 300 years and was “rooted in science and modern philosophy. It emphasizes scientific protocol and is based on the industrial revolution.” However, he mentioned that when it was introduced to Ethiopia, it failed to take hold because the then existing Ethiopian feudal system was based on indigenous education. Modern schooling is intertwined with capitalism, which aims to accumulate capital, but Ethiopian social life is different. Thus, he argued, when modern schooling was imported, “it became *gänät’äle geT’* (alien) to the people.” He further explained that “our social, economic, and political structures are different from those of Europeans, so by adopting their education, we neglected our own.” However, he said, “instead of building upon our knowledge heritage, we have been struggling to implant modern schooling, which has different indigenous, philosophical, and historical roots in Europe, into our system.”

Similarly, an elderly individual noted that Ethiopian societies have long existed, and these societies have their own unique ways of transmitting knowledge and ideas, including reading practices passed down to children. These methods of education have been highly effective, but unfortunately, "we tend to overlook this fact. By neglecting these traditional forms of education, we have made a big mistake - a mistake which I have personally experienced." He further mentioned his sense of disappointment at the overt consequence of modern education, but he was not against modern education. He argues that:

When modern schooling was introduced, many *Liqawənt* (church scholars) were not happy. It completely overtook the ancient Ethiopian educational system and suppressed the country's norms, values, Ge'ez language, and culture. I am not against modern schooling, but it would have been better if it had been built upon the already-established system of ancient education. Instead, we abandoned our wisdom and adopted an alien system. Education becomes tasteless. (Kirakos)

A church scholar also explains the alien nature of modern education in terms of its influence on people to lose interest in appreciating the local language by which wisdom was written. He noted that:

There exist numerous manuscripts of philosophical, medical, psychological, historical, social, and other knowledge written in Ge'ez, a language of great cultural significance in Ethiopia. Unfortunately, due to a lack of interest in learning the language and the perception that it is solely a language of the church, many manuscripts have been disregarded as useless and marginalized from the knowledge domain (in Amharic, *ke awqät mahedär tegelewal*). This disregard has extended even to non-religious manuscripts. As a result, valuable insights and knowledge about Ethiopia's rich history, culture, and society have been lost. (Qerlose)

These discussions share similarities in terms of decoloniality theories, which are devoted to the study of the marginality of institutions, practices, and knowledge located in societies other than the West. The most important thinker associated with African decoloniality theory is Mudimbe, who explains that African philosophy and knowledge are developed dependently on Western epistemology episteme (Mudimbe, 1994, as cited in Kebede, 2004). He argues that "what is more, since most African leaders and thinkers have received a Western education, their thought is at the crossroads of Western epistemological filiation and African ethnocentrism" (Mudimbe, 1994, as cited in Kebede, 2004, p. 122). This can be translated into a concern for the ways in which African childhood realities are defined by extra-terrestrial concepts. Related to this, Mudimbe argues that "many concepts and categories underpinning their (*African elites'*) ethnocentrism are inventions of the West" (Mudimbe, 1994, as cited in Kebede, 2004, p. 122, emphasis added).

One may problematize the idea that the West is universal whereas Africans are different (Kebede, 2004). The theory does not argue against differences between them; rather, it "rejects... the slide into otherness, whose unique virtue is the depiction of difference as lack, imperfection, and inferiority" (Kebede, 2004, p. 125). In his book *Africa's Quest for a Philosophy of Decolonization*, Kebede (2004) suggests relativizing the West as an alternative epistemological practice to address this problem and disengage Africa from Western characterization (Kebede, 2004). He argues that "the West itself is particular and different, just as Africans are" (Kebede, 2004, p. 125). This, Kebede (2004) says, reinforces the recentring of the marginalized indigenous epistemes. Echoing this, one might adopt a new perspective to understand and theorize Ethiopian childhood independently of the mainstream, universal definition of children and childhood.

As discussed earlier and evidenced in the responses of the study participants, indigenous knowledge systems are marginalized. It is noted that the decentring of the Western discourse on Africa as a prerequisite to recentring its traditions and knowledge systems (Kebede, 2004). This view seems similar to Mignolo's (2011; 2007) "epistemic de-linking" from the praxis of the West. Despite its importance to examine recentring nonprivileged indigenous epistemes to global discourse and knowledge economy, decolonial theorists have not paid much attention to the co-existence of Western and African knowledge. Yet, there may be an alternative to recentring Africa without decentring the West. i.e., there may be a way to search for cooperation between them despite, for example, unique conceptions of children and childhood in African societies. Related to this, one participant noted that it is essential to acknowledge the value of these manuscripts and incorporate them into modern schooling to gain a deeper understanding of Ethiopia's heritage and enhance our knowledge domain. When he explained how the Ethiopian Indigenous scholars creatively incorporate foreign knowledge into Ethiopia's epistemological traditions, Sumner concluded that "Ethiopians never translate literally...they add, subtract, and modify...a foreign work becomes indigenous not through originality of invention but originality of style" (Sumner, 1980, p. 396). However, this tradition of knowledge production loses its place in modern schooling (Woldeyes, 2017). Yet, interviews of the participants revealed that "education cannot be created in a vacuum; it should be rooted in one's tradition, philosophy, and history."

In contrast to this, there was another group of interviewees who argued that modern education in the Ethiopia has indigenous root in the country. The section below examines this point of departure in discourse on the source of modern schooling.

5.5.1.2 'Originally Ours'

Although awareness of the West as the root for modern schooling is apparent in academic discourse, students (yeabnät tämariwoc) and headteachers (yenetas) provided a different outlook which departs from this and re-claim its Ethiopian origin. By default, this means modern schooling is not alien.

An 11-year-old student (yeabnät tämari) explained that "it is true that it (modern education) came from abroad, but no, it is ours. The knowledge that foreigners claim as their own is originally ours." In order to justify this, she made a point that "they [foreign nations] took many manuscripts written by Ethiopians from our country, and they told us as if they found a new knowledge. But it actually belonged to us; they claimed it was theirs. What they did was a modification, nothing more. They did find it, not in their country but rather in ours. It was not, and never has been their invention."

A similar view was reflected by a 13-year-old student (yeabnät tämari) in Addis Ababa. He said that countries such as America, France, Germany, and others have developed in science and technology by utilizing knowledge from Ethiopian books. The church scholar also noted that there "are different pharmaceutical manuscripts and books on astronomy which belong the ancient Ethiopian knowledges heritages found in North America, England, France, Italy, Germany, Israel, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Egypt, Fillan, Russia, Norway, Netherlands, Sweden, Poland and Spain" that were exported in illegal ways. An elderly person also shared this and described that "all the pharmaceutical knowledge we the Germans got are from ancient Ethiopian manuscripts." The student (yeabnät tämari) argued that "these countries gained knowledge from our books, but they still label us as poor. Surprisingly, we accept this narrative." He expressed his disappointment by saying that "since they took our books who are the source of wisdom,

we shall get knowledge. Our wisdom should be back. Our history should be back." This excerpt indicates the role of Ethiopian books in the development of other countries, while also emphasizing the problematic dynamic where Ethiopia is seen as poor despite its contributions to knowledge and progress.

In contrast to this, acknowledging the views of the participants and the evidence which testifies to the extraction of knowledge heritages by outsiders, I may argue that much other knowledge exists even today in the Church but is not being utilized. Therefore, much focus is on the criticism of what one participant called "stolen knowledge" holding us back the potential to use other ancient knowledge treasures. Yet another issue is that most non-members of the Ethiopian Church consider ancient knowledge as belonging exclusively to the Church, but this, as most participants noted, is not the case.

When he examined the role of Ge'ez manuscripts in the development of science in Europe, one participant noted that:

The ancient Ethiopian educational system, with a particular focus on the Ge'ez language, had an impact on Europe as early as the 16th and 17th centuries. This was thanks to a German national named Hiob Ludolf, who learned Ge'ez from an Ethiopian scholar named Abba Gorgoryos. Ludolf prepared a Geez-Latin dictionary and used his knowledge of Ge'ez to write about Ethiopian history. He also looted many Ethiopian manuscripts and, with the assistance of Ethiopian scholars, translated them from Ge'ez. This all began 300 to 400 years ago, though Ethiopians only became aware of it relatively recently, as European scholars started to recognize the usefulness of Ethiopia's ancient Ge'ez manuscripts for modern schooling. (Bekalu)

Although, as the above discussions revealed, participants claimed that modern schooling was rooted in the knowledge heritages from Ethiopia, they have criticized it in many diverse issues. Yet, this is a paradox. In what follows, I examine the problems in modern education.

5.5.2 Perspectives on the Gaps in Modern Schooling

5.5.2.1 Hopeless Feeling

As discussed, participants gave diverse ways of understanding indigenous so that modern schooling is distinguished from indigenous knowledge. Yet, as echoed elsewhere in this thesis, participants were centrally concerned with the limitations of modern schooling in the making of future aspirations of child participants.

The primary problem that they saw in modern schooling was the lack of adaptation to the children's context so that they "may not be fully prepared for the world of work, as they lack an understanding of the local context." Even though the educational curriculum provided freedom to use local language, they believed that there was a lack of local content in the schooling that students could not feel part of it. One of the parents noted that, it is "too distant to influence their aspirations and visions of the future". Likewise, for another parent, "if the curriculum was adapted to our country's context, students would have a better understanding of their surroundings and be better equipped for employment after graduation." This clarifies the importance of adapting the educational curriculum to the local context, in order to ensure that students are prepared for the workforce and feel empowered to succeed. Yet, linking schooling to the local context may not necessarily lead to securing employment.

5.5.2.2 Low Quality-Between Expectations and Uncertainty

Some of the parents were engaged in critique of modern schooling along with the issue of quality. While they were aware of the advantages of schooling, what worried them was the problems posed by the quality of education which probably would influence the employment prospect of their children. In this vein a parent noted that "overall, I think the education system is adequate, but it falls short of my expectations. I find that the curriculum does not align well with my children's ages in terms of both quality and quantity. Additionally, the duration of schooling per day can be overwhelming for them." That is, the participant continued to mention, "they learn many details that are less relevant or completely irrelevant to their stage of development. The evaluation methods also have flaws, which can make my children feel despised and demotivated. As a result, my children sometimes feel overwhelmed and struggle to keep up." Furthermore, the participants noted the school-focused education does not prepare students for life after school. This may imply that reality may not match their expectations, and as a result, their aspirations coexist with uncertainty (Ansell et al., 2022; Stambach & Hall, 2016).

Through a historical lens, another participant linked the problem of the low quality with absence of local teachers who know social realities and might predict the crises when new educational system was introduced in Ethiopian. The participant started with the point that when Haile Selassie I University (currently known as Addis Ababa University) was established, "indigenous knowledge was not included. Since the teachers were foreigners, they designed the educational system, which continued to be used." Although Emperor Haile Selassie addressed the idea of centring the university around indigenous knowledge systems, it was not implemented (Kebede, 2006). If the indigenous Ethiopian church education system were included in the modern schooling system, it could bring many benefits to Ethiopia, including quality education. This, as Breidlid and Krøvel (2020); Demssie et al. (2020); Seehawer and Breidlid (2021) mentioned, was also not received much attention in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In a slightly different line of inquiry, a participant invoked that "when we started modern schooling in Ethiopia, we failed to modernize our centuries-old indigenous knowledge and instead emulated the educational systems of other countries." This approach resulted in the loss of "our cultural identity and a disconnection from our cultural heritage". Instead of incorporating "our indigenous knowledge and adapting it to modern times, we merely imitated the educational systems of other countries, resulting in the loss of our unique cultural identity" and making curriculum learning less relevant for students.

5.5.2.3 Dichotomy and Sense of Uprootedness

Schoolteachers and church scholars believed that the introduction of modern schooling in Ethiopia was a mistake, as it was primarily motivated by political objectives and implemented without consulting local scholars and realities.

As discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis, participants noted that upon returning to Ethiopia after completing their education abroad, many Ethiopians refused to integrate indigenous education and instead took a radical position that showed no commitment to traditions and history. This perspective was influenced by a flawed dichotomy between traditional and modern identities. The extreme dichotomy they promoted led to this action, ultimately creating a generation that was uprooted from their own identities. Messay Kebede, the author of "Radicalism and Cultural Dislocation in Ethiopia, 1960-1974," strongly argued that without a significant loss of loyalty to Ethiopia's inherited values and

institutions, one would not be tempted to engage in the radical kind of cultural alienation that the educated youth experienced. This loss of commitment to Ethiopian identity and values as passed on from previous generations made the solution to the problem too far-fetched. In a similar vein, while reviewing the works of Woldeyes (2017), Abebe noted in his editorial piece entitled "Refusals for Liberating Childhood from the Trap of Schooling?" for *Childhood: A Journal of Global Child Research* that "contemporary refusals are also predicated on the claim that schooling promotes centerlessness, detaching children and young people from local wisdom, ways of living, and traditions that are considered valuable" (2023, p. 3).

5.5.2.4 The Uncertain Future of Life - Losing Eternal Life

Although there has been an increase in awareness of the importance of modern education in children's lives and enrolment rates have increased in Ethiopia (FMoE, 2021b), there is debate around *what* children should learn. Additionally, the future of children is often measured by whether their schooling will help them secure employment. MacDonald (2011) argues that in Europe, schooling has expanded faster than employment growth, resulting in young people facing uncertain and unstable futures. Similarly, Ansell et al. (2022) argue that the future is especially uncertain for young people in the Global South. Drawing on the works of Abebe and Ofosu-Kusi (2016) and Weiss (2004), they point out that while Africa is often portrayed as being in a constant state of crisis, global capitalism is changing societies and environments worldwide, leading young people to face conditions that differ significantly from what they are prepared for during socialization. However, the data gathered from participants in this study present a new perspective on understanding the uncertain future in children's lives.

One student participant described *yeabnät* (indigenous) education as the source of meaning of his life and argued that his future would be uncertain without it. In his opinion, modern schooling focuses solely on satisfying physical desires and living a worldly life, without contributing much to the nation's prosperity or cultivating individuals beyond their physical existence. He also noted that modern schooling tends to "prioritize the acquisition of physical knowledge over spiritual wisdom" (in Amharic, *T'bäb segawī enji T'bäb mämfäsawī yelewum*). In contrast, *yeabnät* education aims to prepare individuals for both temporal and eternal life, and values spiritual and moral development as essential for a well-rounded individual and society. Another student participant also emphasized the importance of *yeabnät* education in instilling discipline, which modern schooling often neglects. They noted that *yeabnät* education teaches about both this world and the world to come, taking a holistic approach that makes it unique and valuable.

An interview with parents revealed that while they were optimistic about the potential futures that modern schooling could bring, they also believed that it was rife with uncertainty. One parent described the schooling system in Ethiopia as controlling their children until the age of 15 and beyond, making them feel as if they were in a prison where they were forced to accept and obey views, philosophies, and practices that had a detrimental effect on their lives. This suggests that schooling can make students passive recipients of knowledge, rather than active participants in its production, which is contrary to the subject matter of childhood scholarships (See James & Prout, 1997a; Prout & James, 1990).

Another parent pointed out that schooling can cause students to focus solely on the school world, rather than the life world, since a significant portion of their childhood is

invested in schooling. Additionally, some parents believed that education did not emphasize the purpose of their children's lives beyond acquiring knowledge of the physical world. Put differently, one parent explained that while schooling is crucial for their children to learn about the diversity and unity of human beings and gain skills in science and technology, it does not enable them to "ask critical questions about themselves, such as who they are, what potential they have, and how they can live in their world of lives."

Taken together, the interview accounts affirm that the hope for a 'better future' that children bring to school, and that parents expect, is contingent on indigenizing (albeit the concept is a matter of debate) the educational curriculum through which they hope to improve their employment prospects. Yet, the localization of schooling may not be sufficient to secure employment, as global political and economic factors also affect the labour market. Besides, as participants noted, low-quality education and sense of uprootedness among children have constrained their future aspirations. Unlike previous studies (e.g., Appadurai, 2004; Baker et al., 2014; Bernard & Taffesse, 2012; DeJaeghere, 2016; Hart, 2012; Huijsmans et al., 2021), which drew on material perspectives on the notion of children's future aspirations, the participants' responses demonstrated that children's future is not only a matter of schooling but also the perception of students about the meaning of life that indigenous (*yeabnät*) education can yield. In other words, the future aspirations of children are not solely influenced by education but also by the perception of the meaning of life that indigenous education can provide. This may suggest that modern schooling needs to ground children's learning in the spiritual values that "emanate from the conception of the existence of God and the desire to achieve His will" (Faris, 2012, p. 105). With this in mind, the next section deals with the participants views on the how indigenous (*Yeabnät*) education may be integrated with schooling.

5.6 (Im)Possibilities of Integrating *Yeabnät* (Indigenous) Education with Modern Schooling

After laying the foundation for their perspectives on the shortcomings of modern schooling, participants were asked to reflect on how this educational system could be integrated with the indigenous one. Two competing views were raised, and justifications were provided for each argument.

One student stressed the importance of integrating both material and spiritual aspects of life in the educational system. She noted that "neither aspect should be disregarded, as they can complement each other within our lives." She suggested that "all schools could follow the example of Abune Gorgorious School in achieving such integration." She understood the issue of integration as the school has been teaching the Ge'ez language. An elderly man explained the importance of integrating foreign knowledge into their own system, stating that "if we had continued with our own system and incorporated foreign knowledge into it, our country would have prospered and surpassed the wealth of the G-7, G-8, and G-20 countries. America was only discovered yesterday." Other participants recognized the value of indigenous Ethiopian church knowledge and noted that by incorporating it into modern schooling, "we can create a generation of students who are equipped to make meaningful contributions to their country."

Similarly, a parent explained that indigenous and modern education systems can work together to create a well-rounded education for children. Building on traditional

knowledge can enhance understanding and application of new knowledge. They noted that "by identifying gaps in both systems, we can fill those gaps through the other system. By starting with a foundation of traditional knowledge, children can better understand how foreign knowledge can be adapted and applied to their lives and their communities." The Ethiopian New Educational Policy also emphasizes the need for coordinating the two educational systems to improve human resource development, as publicized by officials from the Ministry of Education of Ethiopia. While outlining how Western thought, through modern education, degrades the traditional values and ways of knowing and doing in Africa, Tedla (1995) also suggested the need for the reintegration of indigenous forms of knowledge into the knowledge system for contemporary and future generations.

As evidenced by the responses of the participants, they have conceptualized integration as the learning of indigenous forms of knowledge in schools. Yet, another group of participants understood it from a different perspective based on how the two systems understand realities and the ways knowledge is produced. A schoolteacher participant historicized that the introduction of modern schooling into Ethiopia was not consulted with indigenous scholars as it was driven by the interests of the emperors who sought to use it as a political tool. This was documented early on by Kebede (2008), who noted that how to modernize Ethiopia never became a public debate during the imperial regimes. The participant believed that "if we integrate indigenous Ethiopian church education with modern schooling or examine indigenous knowledge through the lens of modern schooling, we risk losing the fundamental principles of indigenous Ethiopian education." He expressed that indigenous Ethiopian education is based on the revelation of knowledge, which is often overlooked by modern science and philosophy. Therefore, he said, "by attempting to merge these two forms of education, we may compromise the essence of indigenous knowledge." One of the church scholars also used a tree species as a metaphor, as the following excerpt shows, to illustrate the impracticality of integrating the two systems. He said:

I disagree with those who argue for hybridizing modern schooling with indigenous education. This argument implies that traditional Ethiopian education is insufficient on its own and cannot be effective. However, I do believe that we can learn from both indigenous and foreign educational systems and implement them separately to benefit our children's futures. The foundational principles of these systems are distinct, and attempting to mix them could be problematic. Instead, we can view them as different species of trees on a plot of land and implement them independently while creating mechanisms for knowledge sharing and cooperation. Each system can produce its own fruits independently, but there should be rules in place to facilitate their collaboration. (Eguale)

One of the basic points that most participants raised was the impossibility of merging the religious with the secular system. One participant noted that "I think Ethiopian indigenous education, mostly traditional Ethiopian Church education, can be used in parallel with the schooling system but cannot be integrated. We cannot include religious education in the secular system. Integrating the two would create total paralysis." This is because, as Girma (2014, p. 85) stated, the secular system "prevents any possible relapse into traditional religious dogmatism." He noted that "the principle of secularization does not allow the use of religious elements to colour the public ethos" (2014, p. 87). Yet, while discussing the concept of secularism in Ethiopian academics, Faris (2012) argued that "secular education does not mean that we totally eliminate the concept of God from our psyche and education and, as a result, favour atheistic values." This may suggest that in a deeply religious society, when schooling commitment is

detached from the religious values through which students frame their vision of the future, a sense of disillusionment may arise.

In addition, referring to the existing diversity in religious sects and their politics in Ethiopia, the participant said that "practically, if the church claims integration of its educational system into the schooling system, others such as Muslims, Protestants, and others would have the same claim."

As we have seen, participants' discourses on integration suggest that Western-style schooling has often excluded the philosophies and worldviews of indigenous education, and that there is a need to rethink how to appropriately incorporate them into children's lives. Although most of the participants explained the possibility of providing parallel education to make use of both systems, there were some who strongly argued against mixing the two. They believed that doing so might confuse students in the formation of their aspirations for the future. However, as we will see in chapter 6, students highlighted the missing elements in schooling and the role of indigenous education in filling those gaps. This was the point at which students began to see the benefits of integration. Yet, some participants were concerned about integrating the two, given their different historical, cultural, philosophical, and religious backgrounds. In what follows, I will analyse students' sense of the future through indigenous education and the influence of parents and policies on the formation of their aspirations.

5.7 Summary

This chapter examined the perspectives of the participants on Western-style schooling and indigenous education. It began by describing the characteristics of the students and their parents, including their age, gender, educational status both in schools and at home, and their family's source of income. Following this, the main factors that lead students (yeabnät tämariwoc) to choose yeabnät (indigenous) education, such as accepting the counselling of friends and being part of an educated church elite, were discussed. The next section focused on the participants' conceptualizations of indigenous education, including discussions on the sources of modern education. Some participants considered modern education to be strange to Ethiopian culture, while others traced its origins to Ethiopia's ancient forms of knowledge, particularly the Ge'ez manuscripts. The chapter then covered the negative effects of schooling, such as feelings of hopelessness, uncertainty, and disconnection from one's roots. The final section explored tensions over the possibilities of integrating secular schooling and yeabnät education. The implications of this on students' aspirations were also highlighted.

Chapter 6: Making Sense of Futures and the Negotiating Factors

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I take as my theoretical starting point that children's aspirations and sense of the future, previously touched on, are framed without renouncing the past, in which indigenous epistemologies and worldviews are entwined. Put another way, the future aspirations of children are located in the 'forward movement to the past' in their endeavours for the future. In this vein, children's future aspirations are an indigenously embedded interpretation of reality that is negotiated with families, schools, and educational policies. This starting point espouses elements of constructivism, Sankofa theory and relational theory, which I found important to examine the perspectives of research participants.

In this view, first, I examine the data on the aspirations of *tāmariwoc* (students) and then move on to examine how they imagine their futures and what role *yeabnät* (indigenous) education plays in this. Third, I will explain the role of parents in shaping the visions of the future of their children. Finally, I discuss the ways in which the new educational policy of Ethiopia negotiates students' (*yeabnät tāmariwoc*) futures.

6.2 Time and Future Aspirations Among *Yeabnät Tāmariwoc (Students)*

This section examines data on the aspirations of *yeabnät tāmariwoc* (students) generated through imaginative drawings and semi-structured interviews with child participants. Before delving into how students (*yeabnät tāmariwoc*) envision their future, it is important to discuss the concept of time among Ethiopians. Ethiopia's oral and written languages embody a unique philosophy of time, which some philosophers consider an unreal and illusory notion (Kebede, 2013) that shapes people's understanding of the meaning of life and their worldviews. To illustrate this and examine how individuals' social status changes over time, (Kebede, 2013, p. 5) I refer to the poem "Everything Is *Deja Vu*," written by Kebede Mikael in his *Yeqiné Azmara* and published in 1946.

Solomon, the fine observer, told us
There is nothing new beneath the sun
The naïve person is constantly fooled
Is there anything that stays the same?
While that which you have put your trust in crumbles
The unplanned is found happening
The weak becomes strong while the powerful is humiliated
Young plants grow while fruits are reaped
The wide shrinks, while the narrow expands
The moon becomes beautiful when the sun disappears
When the rich becomes poor, the poor becomes wealthy
When one thing becomes murky, another clears up
The one who was sleepy wakes up
The warm becomes colder
The small is big, the big small
The bad is good, the good bad

It appears like a dream and passes like a shadow
The nature of this world is unpredictable
In the past, in the future, and today in this world
There's nothing new; everything is cyclical

Kebede (2013) has presented significant insights from the poem, including the impermanence of everything, relativity of things, absence of independent existence, cyclical nature of life, and the uncertainty of the future. As Kebede Mikael's poem suggests, "the moon becomes beautiful when the sun disappears," and everything becomes known as its functions are revealed, and barriers are removed. There is no fixed social position for an individual, as stated by Kebede (2013). Ethiopians have envisioned "the coming and transition to a greatly superior life" (Kebede, 2013, p. 9). These perspectives can provide a framework to comprehend the indigenous conception of aspirations, and futurity and challenge the relevance of universal definitions rooted in a particular ideology. Yet, as evidenced in the previous chapter, "to give life certainty and to create encouraging hope, it became necessary to create a special understanding of history" (Kebede, 2013, p. 4), which is what the theory of Sankofa postulates. With this in mind, I examine the future aspirations of children and how they give meaning to life.

Children's aspirations are not merely produced through their school worlds but also located in their life worlds where the social and political realities interplay. This was evidenced in one of the students (yeabnät tämariwoc) who aspired that:

If it is God's will, I aspire to become both the Prime Minister and the Patriarch when I grow up. Unfortunately, Ethiopia is currently experiencing conflicts and violence caused by ethnic divisions among its people. This is why I want to become the Prime Minister - to work towards resolving these issues and promoting unity. Furthermore, the churches belonging to the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähädo are being destroyed and burned down to ash, which deeply concerns me. I aspire to become the Patriarch to serve my community and help restore and preserve our cultural and religious heritage. (Mena, a 9-year-old boy)

The above quote can be interpreted in multiple ways. Another says the student believes the Prime Minister should address conflicts among people. Another says the Prime Minister has the power to resolve conflicts among different groups. Another says the existing Prime Minister faces challenges in solving continuing conflicts but believes that these issues will be addressed by the time he is an adult. Additionally, the student perceives the position of the Patriarch in the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähädo Church as the highest and most influential, which could be the solution to stop the burning of churches in different parts of the country. However, he believes that obtaining these positions in the future is based on the will of God. This shows that children have the ability to observe and analyse problems happening outside of their immediate world and recognize that being crowned as a ruler has a divine source. It is important to note that the student cannot simultaneously hold the positions of Prime Minister and patriarch, as the Ethiopian Constitution of 1995 separates state and religion (FDRE, 1995). However, Ethiopia also had kings who were also priests (Adejumobi, 2006; B Zewde, 2002).

In her drawing, as depicted in Figure 6.1, a student (yeabnät tämari) visually depicted her aspirations and verbally described that "the picture I drew depicts my dream of helping those who are helpless and beggars." As she mentioned, on the left side of the picture, there is a man who is physically impaired and uses a crutch to walk. He was living on the street and was helpless. In the picture, she said, "I am shown bringing him to the hospital and giving him medication. This shows that my dream is to become a medical doctor and help disabled people, beggars, and other helpless individuals. I am

committed to this goal and want to serve my people." While she further reasoned out why she chose this dream, she said that:

I want to become a doctor because I want to help people who are sick. Right now, because there are currently many problems affecting every part of the country, and there is a big problem of the corona that is making many people sick and worried. I feel sad when I see people crying. I want to help stop this from happening again and make people feel better. (Knnnet, a 11-year-old girl)



Figure 6. 1: Drawing by a girl participant, age 11, depicting that she is helping the poor man lives on the street by taking him to the hospital so that he can get treatment.

The girl's reflection on this aspiration indicates that she aspired to a career through which she would benefit others. This may emanate from the sense of collective responsibility among local communities where the researcher also belongs.

Another student (yeabnät tamari), who was 14 years old, wanted to become an engineer, as depicted in Figure 6.2. According to him, there are various construction problems in Ethiopia, so he wanted "to work on them in the future with the help of God". Additionally, he said, "Due to the increasing population in Ethiopia, people are becoming homeless and living on the streets. To solve this, I want to become an engineer. This (pointing to the boy he drew) is me, and the picture above me is a sample housing design". This quote shows that the boy recognizes the housing crisis in Ethiopia, which is caused by the increasing population, resulting in many people who are homeless. He believes that the housing crisis in Ethiopia is a design problem that can be addressed by his future work as an engineer. However, design problems do not necessarily lead to a shortage of housing because corruption and other political factors may play out. This quote also highlights the capability of children to imagine solutions to their community's problems and their sense of belonging to their community in terms of showing their concerns and working to solve problems.

Moreover, the student's belief that his work cannot be accomplished through only his personal effort but also his faith may indicate that his faith in God is deeply internal to his

aspirations. This, in turn, shows the perspective of a schoolteacher who argued that Ethiopians wanted to certify their aspirations and knowledge are rooted in faith obtained from God. Of course, this kind of interpretation may be considered less relevant in some academic groups where people alienate themselves from the sacred by rejecting religious beliefs (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018) and where people consider religion as antithesis to growing scientific explanation of human experiences and disentangle it from any analysis of the aspirations of children.

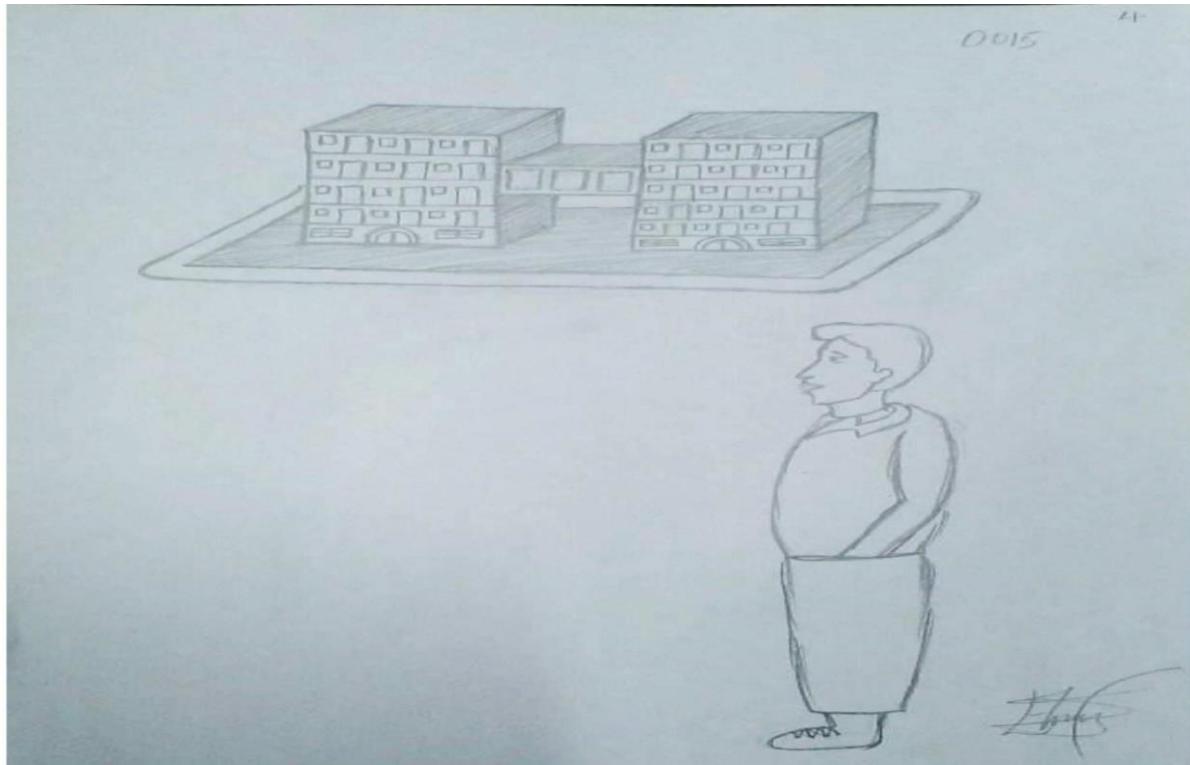


Figure 6. 2: Drawing by a boy participant, age 14, depicting his design of a multi-story building to solve the housing shortage.

Appreciating the role of technologies, a student (yeabnät tamari) explained that:

When I grow up, I want to be a gamer and a programmer. This is my computer (pointing to the desk, as depicted in Figure 5.3 below), and I'm wearing a t-shirt that says 'Love Gaming' (pointing to the heart shape). I've loved gaming ever since my parents bought me a computer in my early childhood, and I've been playing with it ever since. Now I'm determined to become a gamer and a programmer. My mother and father appreciate my interest in coding and support my learning. (Mena, a 12-year-old boy)

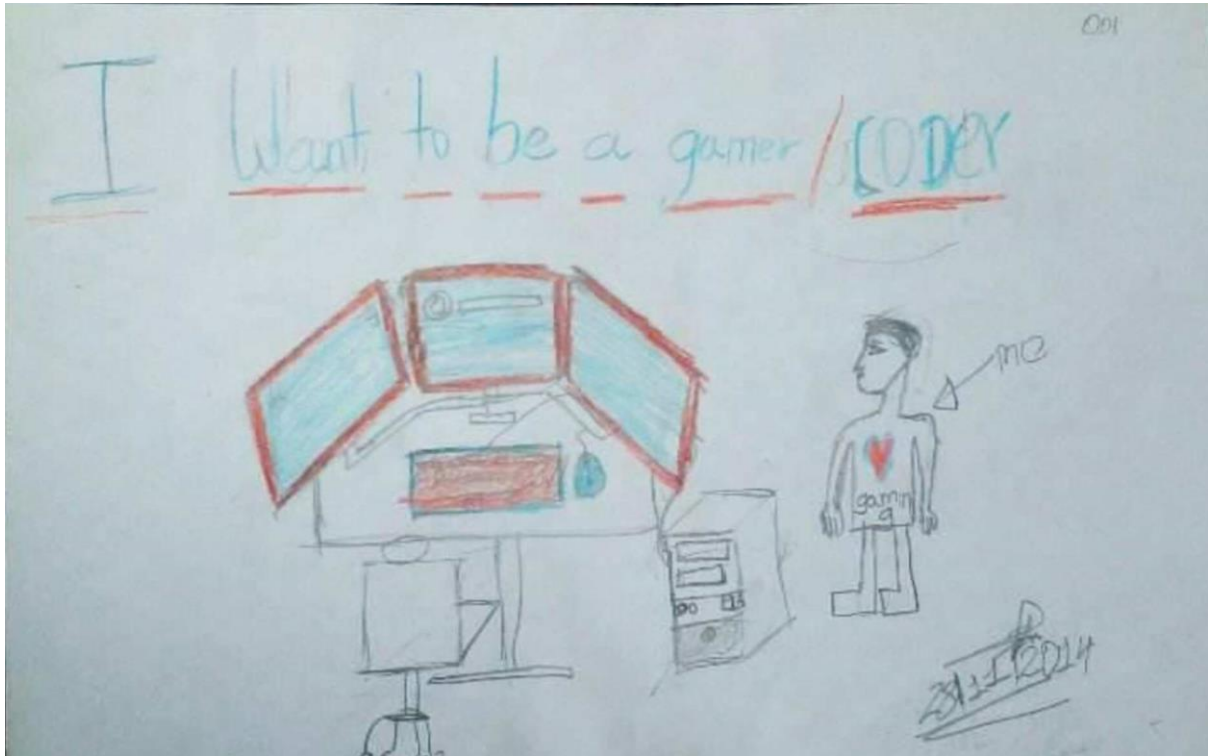


Figure 6. 3: Drawing by a boy participant, age 12, depicting that he loves gaming and wants to be programmer.

The pictures so far are about what child participants aspirations are, and, in what follows, I describe the data about how yeabnät education helps them to realize their aspirations.

6.3 Imagining Futures among *Yeabnät Tämariwoc* (Students)

In this section, I examine the perspectives of students on how yeabnät (indigenous) education shape what they imagined and the way they imagined the future.

6.3.1 Future through Ge'ez

During a discussion on the role of Ge'ez in their lives, a student (yeabnät tämari) explained that "it supports my modern schooling by helping me avoid wasting time in useless places. Knowing Ge'ez is important because it broadens our minds and enhances our ability to learn." This suggests that learning Ge'ez helped her avoid unproductive activities and encouraged personal growth and academic success. However, church scholars and schoolteachers did not believe that learning Ge'ez, compared to other languages, necessarily increased children's mental growth. They argued that valuable information can be found in Ge'ez texts and emphasized the importance of reading the original texts to fully understand their nuances and context. They also warned against relying on translations by Western scholars who may misunderstand the original language and cultural context.

Many participants noted that the lack of incorporation of the Ge'ez language into the modern schooling system has resulted in a significant gap in understanding and appreciation of Ethiopia's rich cultural heritage. By including the Ge'ez language and manuscripts in the modern schooling system, we can preserve and pass down our cultural legacy to current and future generations. This can also help children form

aspirations for their future prospects and navigate indigenous ways of producing jobs that address local problems. Participants also expressed the belief that Ethiopian knowledge is hidden in ancient manuscripts written in Ge'ez and needs to be studied to uncover the wisdom and knowledge of ancient Ethiopians in schools, where "our children form aspirations for the future".

When he explained the picture he drew in Figure 6.4 below, a student (yeabnät tāmari) noted that:

The picture I drew shows how yeabnät (indigenous) education would help me in my life when I grow up. The person standing at the gate of the church is me (pointing to the church), and it shows that I am giving services in the church and praying. This gives me life for my soul. The picture beneath the church indicates how yeabnät education helps me to be in the first class in the intellectual competition in the school. (Medhn, a 12-year-old boy)



Figure 6. 4 : Drawing by a boy participant, age 12, depicting that he will be ranked first if he learns indigenous knowledge forms.

Similarly, another student (Yeabnät Tāmari) said, "When we learn Yeabnät education, God will reveal knowledge to us in school." This indicates that the student believes that learning Yeabnät education is necessary to understand modern knowledge. Another says that knowledge in modern schooling is a minor thing that children can understand if they believe in God. Another says that the knowledge gained through schooling cannot be fully understood without the help of God. They all believe that the source of wisdom is God, and they want to make sure that their knowledge is obtained from Him.

Likewise, a parent noted that "Yeabnät (indigenous) education plays a crucial role in my child's life. It helps him strengthen his faith and excel in school, which is why I make sure he doesn't miss it. I always remind him of the schedule." Another parent argued that "integrity, accountability, responsibility, and trustworthiness are among the main values that my children acquired from an early age in Yeabnät education, which will benefit them throughout their lives." He noted that "individuals who possess these qualities are respected in their communities and are more likely to succeed both personally and professionally." A schoolteacher also noted that "when knowledge comes from religion, it can help to modernize and civilize the world." He elaborated that "when the ways of

knowing in science are rooted in religion and faith, we can attain enlightenment and explore areas beyond the realm of science so that we can align the aspirations of our children with the realities in their locale." This may signal the intersection between schooling and spirituality and the aspirations produced through it.

As the following excerpt reveals, yeabnät education also enlightens children to understand their life-world which is situated in the broader spiritual and cultural values of the societies where they live, and how it empowers them to identify the potentials and challenges to their aspirations.

My child, educating him makes him wiser and enlightens him about the world in which he lives. It protects him from engaging in bad behaviors and potentially recruits him to be a good citizen who serves with honesty and integrity. It prepares him to take responsibility for himself, his family, and his country, helping him gain a thorough understanding of the world and how he should live his life. With God's help and the guidance of the saints, I strive to raise an ethical child who respects others and values humanity. I encourage him to develop his own understanding of the world and find solutions to its problems. These values will serve him well beyond his own country as he works hard and maintains his integrity, not just to comply with the laws of the land, but because he knows he cannot deceive God. He takes responsibility for his actions and avoids blaming others, which is essential for solving the countless problems we face today and in the future. (Yenesew)

While explaining that knowledge is contingent on time and the importance of making it relevant to the aspirations of children, a student named Tämari stated, "In the past, knowledge increased as time passed. However, in the present time, despite the passage of years, knowledge does not seem to be increasing; in fact, it may be decreasing." He suggests that in order to keep up with the modern age, we need to build upon our past knowledge sources and heritages by adding new knowledge to them. This is important in order to realize our aspirations. From student's (tämari) account, one may infer that the notion of modernity does not always have to do with the application of science, technologies, beliefs, and values developed in Europe and North America, but rather with the restoration of past knowledge, often characterized as indigenous knowledge, with the consistent development of new knowledge. This challenges the view that "no better means exists to effect a rapid modernization than through the adoption of the Western system of education" (Kebede, 2006, p. 9). It points to the idea that aspirations are built through education that finds meaning in indigenous forms of knowledge.

6.3.2 Future Through Lights of Wisdom

In some cases, participants made connections between spiritual (*mänfäsawi*) understandings of their lives and their futures. One participant commented that "without indigenous education, it would be like walking in the dark at night with no light. But with this education, there is always light and no darkness." He also expressed that "It is through yeabnät education that students gain a deeper understanding of the world. While man is a half-created being, this education helps him become complete." Here the man spoke of the shortcomings of the schooling to empower children to understand both the material and spiritual world, which leads them to having sense of meaning to their futures. In exposing their opinions about the role of yeabnät education, parent participants gave similar replies. One parent affirmed:

In my opinion, continual education that enables understanding and lifelong learning should be derived from traditions. This is why I prefer to send my children to such a school that emphasizes spirituality (*mänfäsawint*). By considering God, angels, soul, and life after death, individuals can broaden their mindset and attitude towards life. (Maebel)

Another opinion expressed by participants was that while schooling has its advantages, it also allows many dangerous practices and thoughts to spread under the guise of democracy and science, for example out of the rule of God and become secular. The counterchallenge is to protect students from worldviews that are not consistent with their yeabnät education and to, as one participant said, "enlighten the child about the world and increase their worldview from the Ethiopians' perspective." One participant also said that yeabnät education "helps students cope with the schooling agenda being run globally." Alongside this statement, other participants expressed the perception that schooling underestimates the importance of education outside its domain and lacks explanation for children's futures. One church scholar recalled an instance where, in rural areas, families were forced by government officials to send their children, who were attending education in Gubae Bets (indigenous schools), to school. He recalls the exact wording the officials used: "Bring your children who are in the Gubae Bets for education to school." This may imply that education in the Gubae Bets is not considered education. Additionally, as I have personally experienced, the public considers Yeabnät education less important in securing jobs, although this perception is decreasing nowadays. Yet, as some participants noted, schooling is considered a rite of passage by the public, regardless of whether it leads to employment for children.

Signalling the importance of yeabnät education to have a strong sense of morality and a good personality, which will benefit the children in their future aspirations and endeavours, one parent participant noted:

It plays a critical role in teaching my children about moral values and principles in the spiritual realm. By instilling these values at a young age, my children can develop a strong moral compass that will guide their actions and decisions throughout their lives. This moral education can help my children develop positive qualities such as honesty, integrity, and compassion, which are essential for building a good personality. As they grow older, these moral values and principles will become ingrained in their character and guide their behavior in various settings, including their personal and professional lives. ... my children can gain a deeper understanding of the spiritual aspects of life and how they relate to their daily actions and interactions with others. (Tewaneye)

Tellingly, in this quote, the moral values through which children express their aspirations and their influence on how children project their aspirations are felt. Child participants also believed that yeabnät education helped them to be disciplined and have a valued personality by their families and societies, which were their sources of identity. For instance, one student said:

If we talk about how indigenous education is useful for us, we can start by saying that it helps us understand science and technology more easily. But to understand modern subjects, we also need to be ethical. It's through ethics that we can truly understand these subjects. And we can learn about ethics in yeabnät (indigenous) education (indigenous education) since it teaches us about faith and how to be ethical children. Having good ethics is important to have good relationships with our teachers in school. If we don't behave ethically in school, we might get into trouble and won't learn useful things. That's why the ethics we learn in indigenous education are important for us in other schools too. (Knet, a 11-year-old girl)

Similarly, parents expressed that indigenous education provides children with a strong sense of discipline. They are taught about morality, shared values of right and wrong, and acceptable behaviours that are rooted in spiritual values. Parents argued that this would enable their children to make use of all available opportunities to realize their aspirations in the future, beyond just academic achievements that meet the requirements of the job market. Moreover, they noted that creativity has become one of the most cherished skills in the contemporary world, and their children's career interests align with that. According to one parent, this skill is mainly acquired when students join the Qene-

Bet (School of Poetry), where "new blessings for God are created every day, fostering children's wisdom through the daily creation of something new. This has the power to expand their minds, enhance memorization, and remove evil spirits, preparing them for future development."

However, one of the headteachers (Yenetas), in their evaluative reflection on the commitment of the students, said that "Qene is an indigenous form of expression that can be used in non-religious contexts. However, I believe that the current generation may struggle to understand it due to their preoccupation with making money and being business minded." He noted that learning Qene is not easy, and one must join a Qene Guba Bet, far away from one's parents' home, to focus on the learning process. Otherwise, it is difficult to comprehend. There is a tradition in all Guba Bet where students are required to beg for food from households in the surrounding area. This practice is believed to reveal knowledge and blessings in the name of Saint Mary, the mother of God. Without begging, one cannot understand Qene.

Recalling the significance of the spiritual values not only in children's hopes but also in their understanding of the meaning of life, a 11-year-old student (yeabnät tämari) said that "If the child does not have religion (belief in God), he/she does not have value". This statement may express diverse perspectives on the significance of education in the broader context of life. Another says, school achievement is only one aspect of life, and prioritizing material gain through schooling can lead to an impoverished sense of meaning. Another says, children's aspirations and sense of purpose extend beyond the classroom, and neglecting the spiritual dimension of life in education can cause a loss of meaning. Another says schooling should not alienate children from their spiritual and material aspirations but rather enable them to envision and pursue their full potential in both dimensions of life. Connected to this, a parent said that:

The Yeabnät education teaches my children dedication to attain tangible objectives in life. It provides them with integrity and a foundation for answering the question of their human identity. It helps them balance their fleshy needs with their soul needs and prevents bad behaviors from developing. Through yeabnät education, my children learn to identify their strengths and become value-driven individuals. This education improves their adherence to acceptable ethics in the community and gives them spiritual significance for their existence. (Aeimro)

The aforementioned points highlight the significance of aligning children's aspirations, which are developed through schooling, with the spiritual values and knowledge that Ethiopians have accumulated over the years (Faris, 2012), as reflected in their perspectives. However, this spiritual dimension of children's aspirations has been decoupled from the objectives of schooling to this day. Another saying of this is that the aspirations of students are influenced by the spiritual horizons of the communities in which they are raised and socialized, whereas the aspirations produced by schooling are often narrow, predetermined versions of their future (Stambach & Hall, 2016). The Sankofa theory suggests that if we ignore the indigenous spiritual and cultural values in education, the aspirations that emerge from schooling become disconnected from the children's lives. This indicates that there is a link between spiritual values and children's imagined future. From a social constructivist perspective, one could argue that the education system, which is primarily focused on job creation and human capital development, neglects the indigenous perspective of the future and disregards the context in which education is taking place. Therefore, as one participant noted, there is a need for shared moral standards between the indigenous and educational systems to reverse the unfulfilled promises of education and school-based versions of futures among

students. This invites the restoration of the dialogue between religion and schooling (Faris, 2012).

Futures of children are not only produced through the way they imagine their futures but are also negotiated with the expectations of their parents and the workings of the educational policies. With this in mind, the following sections highlight the influence of these factors on how children make sense of their futures.

6.4 Parents' Roles in Negotiating their Children's Future Aspirations

My starting point is that the future aspirations of children can be understood through the temporalities of relations with their parents. Accordingly, as part of semi-structured interviews, parents and children were asked about what they wanted their children to aspire to, in what ways they have supported them, and what they envision about the aim of schooling in this regard. This means how they shaped their children's future aspirations through achieving in yeabnät education and in school.

Knnet, who wanted to be a medical doctor, reported that her aspiration to become a doctor is not only a personal dream but also a shared one with the family. She expressed that "with my grandmother frequently falling ill, I am motivated to treat her and to be of assistance to other sick family members." Furthermore, she desired to extend her help to other members of the community, including the elderly and disabled, in promoting their well-being. As she earlier commented in this chapter, this moral was oriented in her enrolment in the yeabnät education. This may also highlight that the formation of aspiration among children does not border on autonomous decision in the Ethiopian tradition. The tradition, which I know as an insider, the value which I may explain as "we are I," in Amharic *əgnä nän əne*), is commonly shared among the public. The autonomy in Western contexts where schooling is rooted, however, is bordering on individuality with very limited and insignificant social relations (Girma, 2014). Thus, schooling, which signals a particular aspiration, may not be materialized as it contradicts with the aspirations through which parents want their children to aspire through achieving in yeabnät education and in school.

When he talked about how mothers shape the futures of their children, one of the participants critically commented that "the education of children determines their future. What we teach them today will shape their prospects. Therefore, it should be the main focus for parents." However, he continued to mention that "when we send our children to school, we often do not know what they are being taught or exposed to. It seems that anything can happen, and all forms of abuse may be allowed. As parents are busy earning a livelihood to support their families, they only arrive at the school to pick up their children when the daily session ends." He also noted that the main cause of this problem is the "wrong conception of equality, which suggests that mothers should also go out and make money. This idea may not be universally accepted, as in Ethiopia, mothers are seen as sources of knowledge and wisdom. They shape the aspirations and behaviour of their children, and through them, children develop self-confidence and learn the meaning of life. Fathers may not be able to provide this kind of education." Thus, he concluded that "mothers are the schools for their children's future." Yet, he argued, "but we cannot restore this and send mothers home to care for their children. It does not seem feasible. But we need to have another strategy or substitute for a mother's role in children's lives. The only option we have is to institutionally survive institutions by

creating strong surveillance." The role of the Ministry of Education, he commented, should be to "bring these institutions up to the level of playing the motherhood and fatherhood roles. It is the only solution because we cannot return working mothers from the office to their homes in order to care for their children. All resources should be invested in it."

His testimony highlighted that any jobs secured through schooling among mothers prevent the knowledge heritage that should be passed down to their children. As we have seen here and elsewhere in this thesis, schooling was often associated with aspirations in schools and delineated the inheritance of the vision of the future from their parents. Thus, as noted in the previous chapter, despite remaining critical of the promises of schooling in their children's futures, parents send their children to school. Some parents want their children to attend a higher education level in university and be self-reliant to support themselves and their families. However, there are differences in their role in shaping the aspirations of their children. One parent said, "I don't want to impose my own interests on them when it comes to choosing their profession." Another parent replied, "I have different expectations for my children's education. I expect them to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to work in government offices for a certain period of time, where they can serve society and contribute to its development. Afterward, I hope they will use their experience and expertise to create their own private businesses." This may show that parents have hopes for schooling for their children. However, the paradox is that schooling has fallen short of meeting the promises parents have for it (Ansell et al., 2022; Ansell et al., 2020).

Some parents reported that they did not expect their children to always follow the path they desired for them. A parent said, "while it would be nice if they achieved what we aspire for them, we must also recognize that their interests and talents may lead them in a different direction. As adults, we understand the importance and profitability of certain professions, such as medicine, but we cannot predict the future demand for specific careers. Therefore, the choice of profession should ultimately be up to our children". This suggests that parents acknowledge the capacity of children to determine their future choices. Although, as noted earlier in this chapter, children's futures are familial produced, this does not imply that children are passive to what their parents aspire for them. Rather, they are actors within the umbrella of family lives where parents socialize with their children. Here, children's autonomy in the making of their futures is not understood without the shared elements in the family. Thus, I argue that understanding their futures only through their decision could be characterized as what I may call 'false autonomy of being an actor'. Yet, as one parent commented, "We should support our children in their passions and encourage them to pursue a fulfilling career that aligns with their strengths and interests." Thus, the parents' expectation of their children is not the imposition of their interests on their children but supporting them to make use of their capacities (Appadurai, 2004).

In a similar vein, one participant reported, "I don't want to pressure my child into following a particular path. I want him to pursue his own dreams and make his own choices. If I were to force him to become a doctor, for example, he would be stressed and anxious about living up to my expectations. That's why I'm not pushing him to do anything specific. Of course, I do encourage him to value education and explain the benefits of learning, but I never force him to do anything he doesn't want to do. I want him to feel free to make his own choices and be happy with his decisions." When explaining the consequences of putting pressure on children's aspirations, the participant

commented, "I believe that when we impose our expectations on our children, we can undermine their confidence and motivation." She gave an example, saying, "I knew a father who wanted his son to wear expensive shoes to show off his love for his child, even though they could barely afford them. This eventually led to the child becoming disengaged from school and even delinquent. It's important to respect our children's autonomy and let them make their own choices."

In some of their responses, parents expressed that while modern schooling may provide opportunities for professional success, traditional education offers a different kind of fulfilment that comes from serving others and living a purposeful life. They wanted their children to find a balance between these two paths and use their education to make a positive impact on their future. Here, the parents made a distinction between academic success and a meaningful life. Other participants explained that a meaningful life involves succeeding in both material and spiritual aspects, which come from sources beyond schooling and formal education. In this case, the role of the parent is not limited to supporting their children's capacity to aspire merely by providing them with the inputs required for schooling. Rather, since no parent wanted their children to have precarious futures, they socialized with their children in a way that would give them meaningful futures. Childhood scholarships have considered socialization a conservative process that makes children passive recipients (Prout & James, 1990). However, the socialization process, when guided by indigenous worldviews, may be crucial to producing meaningful futures for children.

6.5 Ethiopian's New Education Policy and Yeabnät Tämariwoc (Students) Future Aspirations

As explained in Chapter 2, the review of modern education literature from Ethiopia revealed that indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing are marginalized in the guise of the modernization project in the country. Consequently, the country's traditional education system is being neglected as it is considered "unfit for modernization," and education became politicized (Kebede, 2006, p. 8). Research participants lamented that modern schooling fails to instil achievable aspirations and futures rooted in the knowledge and spiritual heritages of the people and their worldviews among children. During this research, the Ethiopian government endorsed a new educational policy that began implementation. In light of this, I investigate the perspectives of participants on how it impacts the future aspirations of yeabnät tāmariwoc (students).

The data from officials and the policy document (FMoE, 2023) revealed that the previous education and training policies in the country were overly focused on theoretical aspects of knowledge and neglected the practical elements of it. As a result, the policies failed to produce entrepreneurs who could create jobs using technology. This was similar with the response of the schoolteacher who commented that:

The curriculum we used was simply copied from outside sources, and as a result, the children often forgot what they had learned in theory in the classroom. If they were able to apply what they had learned in the physical world, they would be less likely to forget it. However, when we simply copy educational curricula from outside, we inevitably encounter this problem. Therefore, we need to make the curriculum more practical and applicable to the local environment. (Birhanalem)

Moreover, they did not genuinely consider national interests or contextualize schooling in Ethiopian contexts. The data also indicated that these policies did not effectively transform the lives of children and young people by making use of indigenous sources of

livelihoods. Nor did they prepare them to respond to local demands or for global competition. In the new policy (FMoE, 2023), officials have affirmed that emphasis is given to utilizing technologies and knowledge heritages to respond to local and global demands. Yet, the question of how the local interacts with the global, where the knowledge economy was dominated by the West (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018) remains unanswered. By implication, I might say that the realization of future aspirations of children envisioned through indigenous education may be subject to the ongoing unequal influence of the schooling system.

As noted by officials, the demand for a new educational and training policy highlights the lack of indigenous direction in previous policies and is evidence of the non-contextualized influences of modern schooling. Accordingly, the new policy is grounded in providing quality lifelong learning and education for children and young people, with a focus on national direction and flexible demand depending on the context. This addresses longstanding questions from the public, as research participants confirmed that previous policies felt alien to them.

The new policy aims to empower children and young people to explore indigenous knowledge resources and utilize them for their futures. While it acknowledges the importance of indigenous knowledge rooted in traditional educational systems, as outlined in the policy document, the new policy is secular in nature, free from religious influence. This creates a paradox, as the policy recognizes the role of indigenous education while remaining contingent on a secularist stance. The question remains whether the new policy meets the demands of the people and the aspirations of children whose lives are largely confined to the religious mode of life (Faris, 2012; Girma, 2014). This, however, does not imply that "the academic institutions should be converted into religious entities"(Girma, 2014, p. 87). One of the church scholars suggested that the new policy should acknowledge knowledge sources and advocate for the exploration of the wisdoms and philosophies written in the Ge'ez language, without solely connecting it to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The wisdom documented in Ge'ez is often considered the exclusive property of the church, but the virtue of this language in recording history and forms of knowledge belongs to all Ethiopians, regardless of their religion.

Based on the above discussion, it can be argued that when children's school world is disconnected from their life world, their aspirations may become deformed. This can push the theorization of children's aspirations within the school-world to its limits. It is essential that the school and life worlds become mutually enriching and enhancing to form genuine aspirations. The relational stance of this explanation emphasizes the role of parents in their children's lives and how they negotiate their expectations. These expectations are often shaped by educational policies, which can define the future of their children. However, producing visions of the future for children may require sacrificing cultural and spiritual values, as the Sankofa theory suggests. Despite the indigenous ways of imagining the futures of children, the schooling system may remain antithetical to them.

6.6 Summary

This chapter began with a discussion of the concept of time among Ethiopians, which helps us understand the aspirations and futures of yeabnät tämariwoc (students). It then described what students aspire to and examines how their future is imagined through indigenous worldviews. Moving on to familial life, the chapter explored how students' sense of the future is negotiated through parental expectations rooted in indigenous

cultural and spiritual values. Finally, the chapter discussed how the new educational and training policy is cutting-edge in orienting children's futures towards deep knowledge of the traditions and history of the people. However, the new policy is yet to produce aspirations among children that are locally relevant, globally competitive, and practical.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the main findings in line with the research questions. It also recommends the research gaps and a few academic and policy learnings.

7.2 Conclusion

This thesis presented a study of children's aspirations and futures through indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing. Its aim was to contribute a counter-discourse to global paradigms within childhood scholarship, by addressing concerns about the failure of modern schooling to meet its promises. Central to it is how modern schooling can be rethought indigenously, in ways that are relevant to the aspirations and futures of children.

The thesis is a response to childhood scholarship that relies on global models rather than indigenous metaphysics of children's aspirations and futures. Existing scholarship rarely provides a perspective on how the indigenous educational system offers significant alternatives to imagine children's futures. It also responds to tendencies within scholarship to explain and study children's aspirations and futures through Western thinking and experiences. In other words, it challenges the unilinear process that views the schooling of the West as the stage towards which others should aspire to land, and through which non-Western childhood is understood. Instead, it suggests that indigenous ways of imagining children's futures and aspirations need due credence by reconnecting them with indigenous educational realities which were denounced from Western-style schooling.

In response to these concerns, ethnographic research was conducted, focusing on re-envisioning children's aspirations and futures through indigenous education in Ethiopia. Given the prominence of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tāwahədo tradition in the country, emphasis was placed on the Ethiopian traditional educational system. The study was motivated by the researcher's lived experiences of both indigenous education and Western-style schooling.

Adopting a relativist approach, this study attempted to contest the universalist claim that children's future aspirations can be explained through the modern schooling system. I analysed the imagined futures that children construct through the repertoires of indigenous philosophies and worldviews embedded in the broader religious tradition of the people. In this case, the study grounded children's visions of the future on socio-cultural and religious realities, bringing the interface between religious traditions and children's future imaginings into childhood discourses. The virtue of this approach is that it subverts the one-size-fits-all model of imagining children's futures through Western schooling. However, this does not suggest rejecting schooling in theorizing children's future aspirations; rather, it considers it an alternative and particular way of explaining and studying them. Hence, the relativist premise of children's futures in this study did not want to radically reject the schooling system in the study area but advocated for the reconstitution of indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing. This is because dethroning Western-style schooling may not necessarily bring new promises for children's futures but can be a particular form of unfolding them.

Within its recognition of children as creative agents, childhood scholarship takes the issue of power at the heart of its research endeavours (James & Prout, 1997b). There is ongoing resistance to the unequal power relations between the adult researcher and child participants. It is widely recognized that the varying degrees of power in terms of knowledge and experiences between these parties positioned children as oppressed subjects in the research processes (see Boyden et al., 1997; Ennew & Knowing, 2009). This weakens and contains children's imaginings and capacities in the production of knowledge about their lives. As a result, there is a tendency to overpower children by redefining it and ultimately avoiding it from the realism of social relations. Doubtless, the power differences may be the source of inequalities between the adult researcher and child participants, but it does not necessarily lead to relational cracks between them. Despite the fact that the issue of power differences between them is widely recognized, there is a controversy over its appropriateness and relevance in different contexts. Yet, the data from child participants showed that the knowledge and experiences that the researcher possessed were seen as a source of new ways of understanding the workings of schooling in explaining children's future aspirations. This as opposed to seeing power asymmetries in childhood scholarship as bad per se and seeking to diminish or abolish the power relations between the researcher and the researched children. This is because it ultimately avoids the relational and contingent nature of knowledge transmission among generations. While it is essential to avoid exploitative relationships between researchers and child participants, it is also important to recognize the value of researchers' reflections on children's views. Yet, this approach may be particularly applicable to insider researchers who have a deep understanding of the social and religious realities of the study population.

Despite their importance in producing knowledge related to children's future aspirations and studying the population, Tërgwame and Hatäta could be considered an addition to the ethnographic inquiries of childhood scholarship. This is because they offer perspectives from participants across past, present, and future settings. This was demonstrated through the responses of participants who argued that children's future aspirations are influenced by historical changes in the educational system, contemporary circumstances, and future possibilities, where uncertain promises of schooling could be addressed. Therefore, these methods of knowledge production could provide approximate information about changes in the aspirations of children without collecting data at different time periods. This could be considered a form of longitudinal analysis without observing them more than once. However, further investigations are required to determine whether it could be an alternative to longitudinal ethnographic research.

In childhood research, obtaining parental consent to allow children to participate in a study, and asking children whether they want their parents to share information about themselves, is most common (Boyden et al., 1997). However, as this study shows, it is uncommon for parents to transfer their right to give consent for their children's participation in the study to the headteacher, Yenetas. This may not be feasible in settings where individual autonomy is given priority. The present study, however, demonstrated the established trust between the study participants and the headteacher, who was viewed as trustworthy by the parents. Therefore, it may be worthwhile to theorize the individual decision of the child to participate in the study, as it was negotiated through what could be referred to as a "consent transfer" among study participants. Thus, individual consent is developed through social relationships built on trust among people.

As evidenced by this study, the worldviews, traditions, and philosophies that were deemed unsuitable for modern education have been preserved in the indigenous educational system of the country. Embedded in a comparative worldview, study participants defined indigenous education in terms of its benefits for both bodily and spiritual lives. They characterized it as more significant for religious and secular lives than modern education, which only focuses on the material aspects of life. This challenges the perspective that limits the role of education to the physical world. Additionally, through a generational lens, some participants also examined indigenous education as a heritage that connects them to past and future generations. Therefore, in the pursuit of knowledge from the past, indigenous education is the most important tool. As a result, one can say that through indigenous education, children can participate in the past by inheriting the knowledge and wisdom of their ancestors and in the future by passing on this knowledge to the next generation.

The educational and religious realities about children's aspirations that are limited to a specific geographical location can be considered indigenous in another geographical setting through language, as this study demonstrates. This implies that the notion of indigeneity is rooted in the language of a particular society and is not just a geographic phenomenon. This indicates that language has the ability to facilitate cross-cultural understanding and contextual relevance for these realities. In this case, it can be said that the foundation for these realities is relational and embedded in language.

Relatedly, the study revealed a different perspective on the origin of modern schooling; a Western phenomenon. Some participants claimed that it had historical roots in the Ethiopian indigenous educational system and that it was originally theirs. This view may question decolonial theories to rethink how they treat such claim in their perspectives on schooling system in non-Western societies. This was a significant claim, implying that the participants criticized modern schooling for its overemphasis on Western worldviews, philosophies, and practices, despite being founded on non-Western knowledge heritages. The notion of knowledge monopoly may be at play here. However, the point that modern schooling is not purely a Western phenomenon, as it drew from valuable knowledge and values from other cultures, contradicts the prevailing view that it was rooted in a particular ideology and exported from the West (Ansell, 2017). As this study demonstrates, there are differences between indigenous and modern schools in terms of their views on the reality of existence and the means of knowledge. The study also observed that the pitfalls of modern schooling can impact the aspirations and futures of children. It is essential to recognize that the construction of children's aspirations and futures plays between indigenous and schooling systems of knowledge. This suggests that understanding children's vision of the future without considering the realm of these education systems is difficult, despite their differences in the conception of realities and ways of knowing. Therefore, it remains unsettled to examine children's futures through a marriage between indigenous education and the schooling system.

In conjunction with this point, most participants emphasized the urgency of a resurgence and synergy of indigenous education and modern schooling in responding to children's aspirations for the future, given their critique of modern schooling. However, there was ambiguity among some others who argued that they could not properly explain children's future aspirations without considering the consequences of moral standards and imagining them in relational networks with God. Therefore, they believed that schooling's inability to account for children renouncing their religious and cultural values would be partial. This may contradict the claim, mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, that modern

schooling is rooted in a non-Western indigenous milieu that transcends geographical boundaries. Yet, this challenge to the binary view on the origin of schooling and dialectical ways of understanding children's future aspirations through both indigenous and schooling perspectives, as evidenced in the participants' responses. It may suggest a need for cross-cultural ways of theorizing children's future aspirations.

Beyond the employment benefits of children as deacons or priests, indigenous education changed their imaginations of the future, transcending material possessions and emphasizing spiritual and religious dimensions. This was an area that modern schooling did not focus on, which was objected to by the participants, as it left children in a state of expectation and uncertainty. The low quality of schooling, which was explained in terms of losing local context and content, impacted children's ability to aspire within the domain of their religious background and individual vision of the future, as they felt a sense of cultural dislocation in schooling.

Another area of concern raised in this study was the purpose of education for eternal life, which, in my opinion, has received little attention in academic inquiries of children's life studies. However, as evidenced in this study, children explained their aspirations and future in the context of their relationship with God. They examined what would be real in their futures and aspirations, relying on their faith and relationship with God. This may push forward a relational view of children's aspirations, which are also negotiated through parents and schools. Here, what children consider real for their lives can be understood in relation to how their aspirations are negotiated with parents and schools. By the same token, their sense of the future is also explained by their relationship with God, and this could be referred as 'relational realism' (Wan, 2007) if they define what they believe to be real about their future aspirations as contingent upon their faith. This highlights the importance of indigenous education in challenging the understanding of children's future aspirations, mainly through a unilinear perspective that centres on modern schooling. By this, decolonial and Sankofa theories converge, sharing the view that indigenous education provides another, but not alternative, system of explaining children's futures and aspirations.

Although they outlined the drawbacks of schooling in relation to future prospects, this study provides evidence that children's conceptions of their futures and the formation of their aspirations were influenced by the intersection of their school-and life-worlds, where religious, social, and political issues played out. That is, their aspirations were not solely derived from their interests developed in school but were also influenced by and embedded in broader familial and societal concerns. This demonstrates that aspirations are not solely individual phenomena but are also culturally and religiously constructed. However, while aspirations were examined as a constructed phenomenon, they may still be cross-culturally produced, despite differences in socio-cultural and political contexts in which children grow up. In this way, one could argue that examining cross-cultural realities can aid in the development of models that are applicable to diverse contexts, in order to better understand and policing children's aspirations and futures. However, this may require research efforts to shift the focus towards acknowledging the existence of multiple realities of children's future aspirations with necessarily theorizing them from a cross-cultural perspective. To be clear, this does not mean advocating for a model developed solely in a specific political, social, historical, or cultural context, but rather a model that encapsulates different settings.

The study provides evidence that indigenous education offers a way to reconceptualize how children envision their future and suggests the need to shift the focus of education beyond material aspects of their lives. The knowledge, worldviews, and practices documented in the Ge'ez language provided a framework for reimagining future aspirations beyond a schooling-centric approach to defining the meaning of life and vision of the future. Importantly, this broadens their minds and enhances their ability to learn, enabling them to understand their lives and develop worldviews that connect spiritual values to their visions of making a living through schooling. This approach provides a means for them to realize their full potential both spiritually and economically. Addis Alemayehu noted that indigenous education serves as "a powerful means to unite spiritual existence with the secular mode of life" (Alemayehu, 1956a, p. 107, as cited in Kebed, 2006, p. 7), which suggests the need to reinstate the secular and religious foundations of education and systematize it to explain children's future aspirations. This highlights the potential of integrating secular and religious dimensions to examine children's future aspirations, which have predominantly been explained using secular and individualistic constructs of children's lives.

According to the participants, children's aspirations are influenced in various ways by their parents' expectations. The study found that parents were catalysts for their children's future aspirations, advocating for their children to pursue indigenous education. While they did not force their children to aspire to a particular profession, parents played an important role in influencing their children to acquire knowledge that they believed would be useful in realizing their children's aspirations through spiritual values and making their lives meaningful. The value of socializing children with the knowledge and worldviews of this educational system in shaping their careers along with both secular and religious aspects of life was widely recognized. In other words, they were socialized to balance the material and spiritual dimensions of their lives. This aspect of socialization may show how parents help their children aspire to their future through means other than a particular vision of the future through schooling. The idea of socializing children in this way may conflict with the notion of children as individuals with autonomy. However, in the study context, children were essentially part of the family, and their visions of the future were intertwined with those of their parents.

Children's aspirations and futures are also subject to politics when educational policies enter the discourse. The new educational and training policy aims to reinstate marginalized indigenous knowledge and make it integral to the schooling system. It claims to refocus on the philosophies, worldviews, and practices of the people and make them a part of the educational curriculum and the source of children's identities and futures. However, as the analysis of this study revealed, it is similar to previous policies in its secularist position, which removes religious elements and realities that are the sources of these worldviews from the policies. This is counter to the religious base of the public ethos and children's visions of the future. Furthermore, the policy emphasizes the competitiveness of children in global spheres without abandoning the indigenous path. However, it remains an object of inquiry how this would be realized in the age of the knowledge economy, where schooling-centric systems continue to dominate the indigenous.

7.3 Recommendations

7.3.1 Moving towards Cross-Cultural Epistemologies

Returning to the main research question of how schooling can be made indigenously relevant to children's visions of the future and the epistemology of the thesis, a new question emerged: how can we create an 'epistemological fusion' between knowledge created in indigenous and schooling systems to fully understand childhood aspirations and futures and advocate for the well-being of children? To address this, evidence-based hybrid reimaginings in childhood scholarship are needed, redefining local knowledge as a systematic body of knowledge. It is also important to consider how the knowledge heritage of indigenous people can be utilized to advance a holistic, not selective, theorization of childhood to transform children's present and future lives. Contemporizing childhood research by learning from the knowledge ecology, and experiences of indigenous peoples is a thoughtful direction that acknowledges the achievements made thus far in the field. Such an approach could help to reframe philosophical and epistemological frameworks in childhood studies.

While the relativist stance of this study allowed for the unpacking of constructs of aspirations and futures based on underlying religious and cultural realities of the study population, it limited engagement with cross-cultural realities of children's future aspirations. This suggests that the constructivist stance of this study and childhood field, in general, overlooks cross-cultural phenomena in children's lives. Although there are studies in the field conducted from cross-cultural perspectives, over-focusing on cultural specificities limits the ability to develop subject matter that crosses cultural realities. Without such efforts, the field risks stagnation. This is the research agenda that I am interested in exploring further.

7.3.2 Renovating the Indigenous

Doubtless, as shown in this study, the indigenous education provides another way of examining children's vision of the future and model of social progress and individual success. Scholars and practitioners need to re-envisioning how the indigenous education would be used to examine the children's aspirations through placing emphasis on the long-standing traditions, knowledge heritage, philosophies and worldviews accumulated for centuries. This could partly be achieved through, in Girma (2014, p. 87) words, "responsible reinterpretations of indigenous concepts based on grass-roots sensibility". And the rediscovery of indigenous education and creating a sphere where indigenous and global knowledge can meet is the homework for the Ethiopian Government policies.

7.3.3 Rethinking Secular Stance in the Educational and Training Policies

The findings of this study suggest that the FMoE should reconsider the role of religious and cultural forces in the philosophy of the newly endorsed educational and training policy to genuinely root children's aspirations and futures in indigenous epistemes and public ethos. Simply advocating for indigenous forms of knowledge and condemning schooling may not fully address the issue of uncertain promises within the educational system. It is necessary to return to the indigenous sources of education, tradition, and history, and materialize them within the modern schooling system. This could be achieved by re-engaging the traditional educational system with the schooling system through political commitments.

In this sense, the policy becomes a double-edged sword, serving both material and religious purposes and integrating them into children's vision of the future.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Map of the Study Sites

Appendix 2: Sample Pictures while Children Drew Pictures of Their Aspirations

Appendix 3: Letters of Support

Appendix 4: Guide for Semi-Structured Interview with Child Participants

Appendix 5: Guide for Semi-Structured Interview with Adult Participants

Appendix 6: Information Letter and Consent Statement with Children

Appendix 7: Information Letter and Consent Statement with Parents

Appendix 8: Information Letter and Consent Statement with Schoolteachers

Appendix 9: Information Letter and Consent Statement with Church Scholars

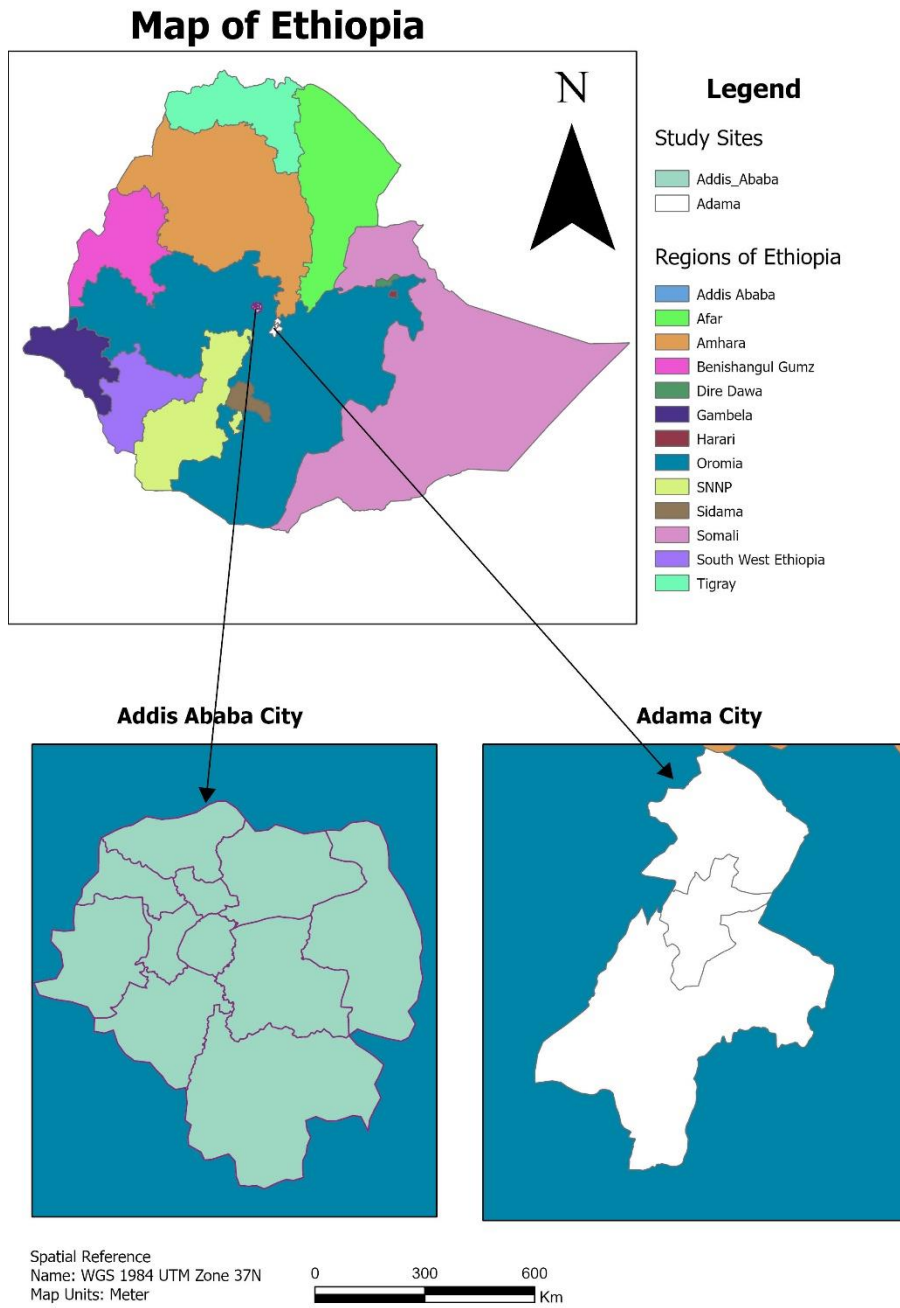
Appendix 10: Information Letter and Consent Statement with Church Scholars

Appendix 11: Guide for Focus Group Discussion with Children

Appendix 12: Checklist for Children's Individual Imaginative Drawings of Their Aspiration

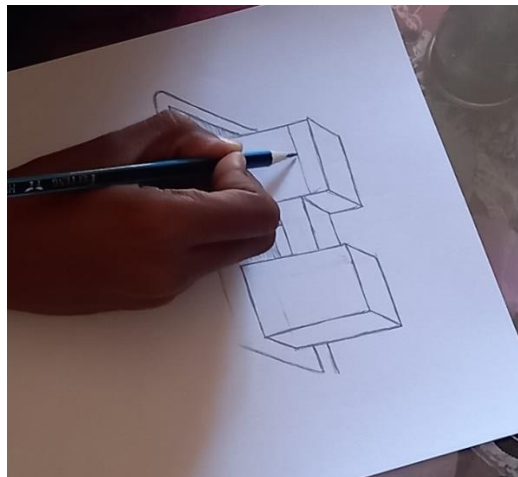
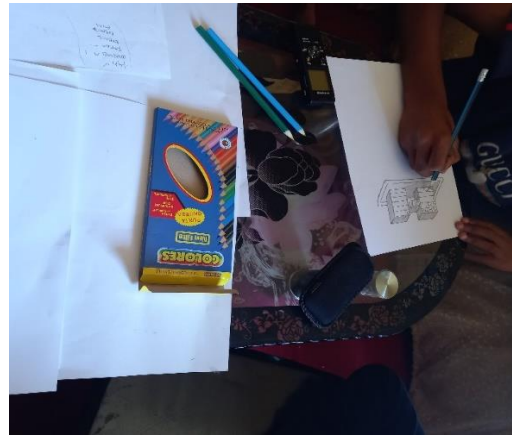
Appendix 13: Ethical Clearance from Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD)

Appendix 1: Map of the Study Sites



Source: Author with the help of Rakeb Desta (2023) who is a student at NTNU.

Appendix 2: Sample Pictures while Children Drew Pictures of Their Aspirations



Appendix 4: Guide for Semi-Structured Interview with Child Participants

Age: _____

Gender (boy/girl): _____

Formal school educational level: _____

Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähädo church education level: ____

Date of interview: _____

Place of interview (Adama/Addis Ababa): _____

Time interview started: ____

Time interview completed: _____

Interview ID: _____

Children's experiences of Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähädo church education

1. What are the things you like to do most? What are the things you like to do the least? Why?
2. Do you have brothers and sisters? If so, how many brothers or sisters do you have?
3. Do your brothers and sisters learn at the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähädo church *Gubae Bet* (traditional school)? If not, why? If so, why?
4. Do you have a friend or friends from your neighbourhood who attend the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahdo Gubae Bet* (traditional school)?
5. Why do you come to the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähädo church *Gubae Bet* (traditional school)?
6. Who has told you about the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähädo church *Gubae Bets* (traditional school)? With whom did you come first?
7. Could you tell me please the time when your interest in Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahdo* church education first began?

Children's perspectives about the use of indigenous and 'modern' knowledge for their aspiration and futures

1. I would like you to tell me about what you learn at the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähädo Church *Gubae Bet* (indigenous school).
2. What you learn in *Gubae Bet* (indigenous school) of the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähädo church differs from what you learn in formal school? If so, how?
3. Can you give me a specific example of how the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähädo church education is different from what you have learned in formal schooling?
4. What do you want to be doing in the future? Why? [**Probe:** what job would the boy or girl like to do after finishing formal schooling?]
5. Do you feel that what you have learned in formal schooling is important for what do you aspire to achieve? If so, how? If not, why? [**Probe:** how formal schooling affects the child's future, for better or worse]
6. What do you think is the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähädo church education is appropriate for?
7. How the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähädo church education going to be useful for you in the future [for the job the child aspires]?
8. What do you think the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahdo* church education will serve for other children too?
9. What do your parents/guardian want you to be? Why?

10. Do you agree with your parent/guardian expectations of you? If so, why? If not, why?

Appendix 5: Guide for Semi-Structured Interview with Adult Participants

Parents/guardians:

Date of interview: _____

Place of interview (Adama/Addis Ababa): _____

Time interview started: _____

Time interview completed: _____

Interview ID: _____

1. Could you tell me what level of education you have reached in formal schooling?
2. What is your source of income or what do you do to make a living?
3. How many children do you have?
4. How many of your children are attending both formal schooling and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo church education? (Applicable if the parents/guardians have two and more children)
5. What does indigenous education mean to you?
6. What level of formal schooling do you like your child/children to reach in formal schooling? What about in-church schooling?
7. What do your children aspire to be in the future both in formal schooling and church education?
8. How far and in what ways you have supported your child/children to make their aspirations real in the future in both schools?
9. What expectations do you have about your child/children in the future after completing formal schooling? What about after completion of church schooling?
10. Do you think formal schooling is (or could be) useful/mandatory in your child's/children's current and future lives? How? Please explain in detail with your own justification.
11. What do you feel about the quality of the formal schooling that your child/children attend/s?
12. What do you suggest about the ways in which the quality of formal schooling could be further enhanced/improved?
13. Could you tell me why you have enrolled your child/children in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo church education? Please list your reasons as much as possible in light of [discipline, traditions, wisdom, enlightenment to their identity and history, etc.]
14. Tell me how the knowledge gained from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo church education will be useful in your child's/children's current and future lives?
15. What are the perceived challenges you anticipate in aligning church education with formal schooling? What mitigation strategies are there for the challenges in your opinion?

Church Scholars and Yenetas (Headteachers):

Date of interview: _____

Place of interview (Adama/Addis Ababa): _____

Time interview started: _____

Time interview completed: _____

Interview ID: _____

1. Could you please tell me the history of this Gubae Bet (traditional school) of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo church?
2. For how many years have you thought boys and girls in this Gubae Bet (traditional school) of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo church?
3. Why do you want to become a teacher in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church educational system?
4. Tell me number of boys and girls who had been enrolled while it was founded?
5. How many boys and girls are currently attending?
6. Tell me the type of education you have thought boys and girls?
7. Did you attend formal schooling? If so, what is your level of education?
8. What is the difference between formal schooling and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church educational system?
9. Tell me what indigenous knowledge means to you?
10. What kind of knowledge are indigenous? 11. What kind of ways of knowing are indigenous?
11. Could you tell me what kind of knowledge do boys and girls gain from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo church's education? Tell me the ways of knowing?
12. How can the knowledge gained from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo church's education be used to better the lives of boys and girls now and in the future?
13. How can the knowledge gained from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo church's education be integrated to formal schooling?
14. Could you tell me how Ge'ez language provides boys and girls unique ways of perspective and influence their future aspirations?
15. How can boys and girls use Ge'ez language in a way that helps them to understand nonspiritual knowledge?
16. In what ways would the Ge'ez language help boys and girls solve their problems in the making of the future?
17. How could the Ge'ez language benefit formal schooling in Ethiopia?
18. How far would formal schooling for boys and girls be useful while it is integrated with indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing?

Educational Policy Makers:

Date of interview: _____

Place of interview (Adama/Addis Ababa): _____

Time interview started: _____

Time interview completed: _____

Interview ID: _____

1. What is your job position title?
2. How many years of experience do you have in educational policy making?
3. Did you participate in making of the new Ethiopian educational road map?
4. What is the main aim of having the new Ethiopian educational road map?
5. What changes the new Ethiopian educational road map have brought over the previous educational policy?
6. Did you conduct research before you design the new Ethiopian educational road map? 7. Are children participated in the research before you design the new Ethiopian educational road map? What are their main concerns?
7. What is indigenous knowledge mean for you?
8. How do you differentiate indigenous and 'modern' knowledge?
9. Are the indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing included in the new Ethiopian educational road map?
10. Could you tell me some examples of indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing included in the new Ethiopian educational road map?
11. How can the indigenous knowledge be used to better the lives of boys and girls now and in the future?
12. Tell me how the indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing could be integrated with the 'modern' knowledge in formal schoolings.

Appendix 6: Information Letter and Consent Statement with Children

Information Letter

Are you interested in taking part in the research project “**(indigenous knowledge and changing aspirations of children in Ethiopia)**”?

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to [explore how modern education needs to be rethought and knowledge and learning are reimagined indigenously to make it responsive to the aspiration of children in Ethiopia]. In this letter, we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

Dear participant, the aim of this project is to know how indigenous education will be useful for the future aspirations of you and your friends. I will ask you about what you understand by indigenous and "modern" knowledge. I will give you an example of how to differentiate these two. I'd also like to know what your future goals are and how your education in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and formal schooling will help you achieve them. I'd also like to know what your parents/guardians, teachers, and officials think about your ambition and how knowledge from the Ethiopian Orthodox church and formal schooling will help you achieve your future goals.

It is a master's thesis for the childhood studies program in the Department of Education and Lifelong learning at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

Who is responsible for the research project?

[Norwegian University of Science and Technology] is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

You have been selected purposefully as you are enrolled both in formal schooling and in church education. The number of participants who would participate among your classmates will be decided by the data saturation technique after I know that enough data has been generated with you.

What does participation involve for you?

If you choose to take part in the project, this will involve you being involved in a semi-structured interview with me. It will take approximately 45 minutes. You will tell me about your current and future aspirations and the use of church education and formal schooling to achieve this. Your answers will be recorded electronically. In an interview, I will also ask your parents or guardian and teachers to provide information about you. It will be information about how formal schooling and church education will be useful in realizing your aspirations. I will record the interview and take notes.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data.

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

Only I and the project supervisor will have access to your personal data. I will replace your name and contact details and address with a code after immediately the interview ends. Your personal data will be stored safely separately from the rest of the collected data.

Your age and gender will be published in the research report.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end [June 2023]. Your personal data will be digitally recorded using Dictaphone and anonymized at the end of the project.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:
access the personal data that is being processed about you.
request that your personal data is deleted.
request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified.
receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with [*Norwegian University of Science and Technology*], Data Protection Services has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

The supervisor for the project is Professor Anne Trine Kjørholt, Department of Education and Lifelong Learning, Norwegian University of Sciences and Technology, 126 Paviljong A Loholt allé 85 Dragvoll, Trondheim, Norway, Tlf 73596241 (Office)

Our Data Protection Officer: [Thomas Helgesen, Director Organization, and Infrastructure, thomas.helgesen@ntnu.no, +47 93079038, Sluppenveien 12B/C, Mollenberg 4etg, Trondheim]

Data Protection Services, by email: (personverntjenester@sikt.no) or by telephone: +47 53 21 15 00.

Yours sincerely,



Project Leader

Student (if applicable)

(Researcher/supervisor)

Consent Statement

I have received and understood information about the project [*indigenous education and changing aspirations of children in Ethiopia*] and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in conversation with you
- for my parent/guardian to give information about me to this project about my aspirations and future lives after completing formal schooling*
- that my data shared by my teacher will be processed if my parents or guardians are allowed.*
- for information about me to be published in a way that I cannot be recognized*

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. [*June 2023*]

(Signed by participant, date)

Appendix 7: Information Letter and Consent Statement with Parents

Information Letter

Are you interested in taking part in the research project “(indigenous knowledge and changing aspirations of children in Ethiopia)”?

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to [explore how modern education needs to be rethought and knowledge and learning are reimagined indigenously to make it responsive to the aspiration of children in Ethiopia]. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

Dear participant, the main purpose of the project is knowing how indigenous education will be useful for the future aspirations of children in Ethiopia. It has four research questions. These are: what does indigenous knowledge mean to children, teachers, and education policy makers? how do children differentiate and use indigenous and ‘modern’ knowledge for their aspiration and futures? how indigenous knowledge and ways of learning is linked/respond to children’s aspirations and futures? how do children make sense of their futures where their aspirations and expectations are negotiated with parents, schools, and the changing of educational polices?

It is master’s thesis for childhood studies program in the department of Education and Lifelong learning at Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

Who is responsible for the research project?

[Norwegian University of Science and Technology] is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

You are asked to participate in the study as you have children who are currently enrolled both in formal schooling and church education. The number of participants from the parents/guardian of your children’s friends will be decided by the data saturation technique after the researcher knows that enough data has been generated.

What does participation involve for you?

If you choose to take part in the project, this will involve you being involved in a semi structured interview with me. It will take approximately 45 minutes. The semi-structured interview includes questions about your current and future aspirations and the use of church education and formal schooling to achieve this. Your answers will be recorded electronically.

In an interview, I will also ask your children to provide information about your opinion regarding your expectations from them now and in the future. It will be information about how formal schooling and church education will be useful in realizing their aspirations. I will record the interview and take notes.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be

made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

The project supervisor will have access to the personal data. I will replace your name and contact details with a code. Data will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end *[June 2023]*. *Your personal data will be digitally recorded using Dictaphone and anonymized at the end of the project.*

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:
access the personal data that is being processed about you.
request that your personal data is deleted.
request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified.
receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with *[Norwegian University of Science and Technology]*, Data Protection Services has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

The supervisor for the project is Professor Anne Trine Kjørholt, Department of Education and Lifelong Learning, Norwegian University of Sciences and Technology, 126 Paviljong A Loholt allé 85 Dragvoll, Trondheim, Norway, Tlf 73596241 (Office)

Our Data Protection Officer: [Thomas Helgesen, Director Organization, and Infrastructure, thomas.helgesen@ntnu.no, +47 93079038, Sluppenveien 12B/C, Mollenberg 4etg, Trondheim]

Data Protection Services, by email: (personverntjenester@sikt.no) or by telephone: +47 53 21 15 00.

Yours sincerely,



Project Leader

Student (if applicable)

(Researcher/supervisor)

Consent Statement

I have received and understood information about the project [*indigenous education and changing aspirations of children in Ethiopia*] and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in discussion with you about schooling
- for my child to be interviewed*
- for my child to give information about me to this project about my future expectation from them in the future*
- for information about myself to be published in a way that I cannot be recognised, that is, my anonymity and my child's anonymity will be preserved.*

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. [*June 2023*]

(Signed by participant, date)

Appendix 8: Information Letter and Consent Statement with Schoolteachers

Information Letter

Are you interested in taking part in the research project “(indigenous knowledge and changing aspirations of children in Ethiopia)”?

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to [explore how modern education needs to be rethought and knowledge and learning are reimagined indigenously to make it responsive to the aspiration of children in Ethiopia]. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

Dear participant, the main purpose of the project is knowing how indigenous education will be useful for the future aspirations of children in Ethiopia. It has four research questions. These are: what does indigenous knowledge mean to children, teachers, and education policy makers? how do children differentiate and use indigenous and ‘modern’ knowledge for their aspiration and futures? how indigenous knowledge and ways of learning is linked/respond to children’s aspirations and futures? how do children make sense of their futures where their aspirations and expectations are negotiated with parents, schools, and the changing of educational polices?

It is master’s thesis for childhood studies program in the department of Education and Lifelong learning at Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

Who is responsible for the research project?

[Norwegian University of Science and Technology] is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

You are asked to participate in the study as you are a schoolteacher and had been attended in the church education. The number of participants will be decided by the data saturation technique after the researcher knows that enough data has been generated.

What does participation involve for you?

If you choose to take part in the project, this will involve you being involved in semi structured interview with me. It will take approximately 45 minutes. The semi-structured interview includes questions about your current and future aspirations and the use of church education and formal schooling to achieve this. Your answers will be recorded electronically.

It will be information about how formal schooling and church education will be useful in realizing children’s aspirations. I will record the interview and take notes.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

The project supervisor will have access to the personal data. I will replace your name and contact details with a code. Data will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end [June 2023]. Your personal data will be digitally recorded using Dictaphone and anonymized at the end of the project.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:
access the personal data that is being processed about you.
request that your personal data is deleted.
request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified.
receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data.

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with [Norwegian University of Science and Technology], Data Protection Services has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

The supervisor for the project is Professor Anne Trine Kjørholt, Department of Education and Lifelong Learning, Norwegian University of Sciences and Technology, 126 Paviljong A Loholt allé 85 Dragvoll, Trondheim, Norway, Tlf 73596241 (Office)

Our Data Protection Officer: [Thomas Helgesen, Director Organization, and Infrastructure, thomas.helgesen@ntnu.no, +47 93079038, Sluppenveien 12B/C, Mollenberg 4etg, Trondheim]

Data Protection Services, by email: (personverntjenester@sikt.no) or by telephone: +47 53 21 15 00.

Yours sincerely,



Project Leader

Student (if applicable)

(Researcher/supervisor)

Consent Statement

I have received and understood information about the project [*indigenous education and changing aspirations of children in Ethiopia*] and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in *discussion with you about schooling*
- for information about myself to be published in a way that I cannot be recognised*
- to shar information about my students if their parents or guardians are willing.*

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. [*June 2023*]

(Signed by participant, date)

Appendix 9: Information Letter and Consent Statement with Church Scholars

Information Letter

Are you interested in taking part in the research project “(indigenous knowledge and changing aspirations of children in Ethiopia)”?

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to [explore how modern education needs to be rethought and knowledge and learning are reimagined indigenously to make it responsive to the aspiration of children in Ethiopia]. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

Dear participant, the main purpose of the project is knowing how indigenous education will be useful for the future aspirations of children in Ethiopia. It has four research questions. These are: what does indigenous knowledge mean to children, teachers, and education policy makers? how do children differentiate and use indigenous and ‘modern’ knowledge for their aspiration and futures? how indigenous knowledge and ways of learning is linked/respond to children’s aspirations and futures? how do children make sense of their futures where their aspirations and expectations are negotiated with parents, schools, and the changing of educational polices?

It is master’s thesis for childhood studies program in the department of Education and Lifelong learning at Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

Who is responsible for the research project?

[Norwegian University of Science and Technology] is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

You are asked to participate in the study as you are a church educator. The number of participants will be decided by the data saturation technique after the researcher knows that enough data has been generated.

What does participation involve for you?

If you choose to take part in the project, this will involve you being involved in a semi structured interview with me. It will take approximately 45 minutes. The semi-structured interview includes questions about your current and future aspirations and the use of church education and formal schooling to achieve this. *Your answers will be recorded electronically.*

It will be information about how formal schooling and church education will be useful in realizing children’s aspirations. I will record the interview and take notes.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

The project supervisor will have access to the personal data. I will replace your name and contact details with a code. Data will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end *[June 2023]*. *Your personal data will be digitally recorded using Dictaphone and anonymized at the end of the project.*

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:
access the personal data that is being processed about you.
request that your personal data is deleted.
request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified.
receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with *[Norwegian University of Science and Technology]*, Data Protection Services has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

The supervisor for the project is Professor Anne Trine Kjørholt, Department of Education and Lifelong Learning, Norwegian University of Sciences and Technology, 126 Paviljong A Loholt allé 85 Dragvoll, Trondheim, Norway, Tlf 73596241 (Office)

Our Data Protection Officer: [Thomas Helgesen, Director Organization, and Infrastructure, thomas.helgesen@ntnu.no, +47 93079038, Sluppenveien 12B/C, Mollenberg 4etg, Trondheim]

Data Protection Services, by email: (personverntjenester@sikt.no) or by telephone: +47 53 21 15 00.

Yours sincerely,



Project Leader

Student (if applicable)

(Researcher/supervisor)

Consent Statement

I have received and understood information about the project [*indigenous education and changing aspirations of children in Ethiopia*] and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in discussion with you schooling*
- for information about myself to be published in a way that I cannot be recognised*
- to share information teaching in Ethiopian Orthodox church*
- to share information about the aspirations of my students without mentioning sensitive issues which identify them.*

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. [*June 2023*]

(Signed by participant, date)

Appendix 10: Information Letter and Consent Statement with Church Scholars

Information Letter

Are you interested in taking part in the research project "*(indigenous knowledge and changing aspirations of children in Ethiopia)*"?

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to *[explore how modern education needs to be rethought and knowledge and learning are reimagined indigenously to make it responsive to the aspiration of children in Ethiopia]*. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

Dear participant, the main purpose of the project is knowing how indigenous education will be useful for the future aspirations of children in Ethiopia. It has four research questions. These are: what does indigenous knowledge mean to children, teachers, and education policy makers? how do children differentiate and use indigenous and 'modern' knowledge for their aspiration and futures? how indigenous knowledge and ways of learning is linked/respond to children's aspirations and futures? how do children make sense of their futures where their aspirations and expectations are negotiated with parents, schools, and the changing of educational polices?

It is master's thesis for childhood studies program in the department of Education and Lifelong learning at Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

Who is responsible for the research project?

[Norwegian University of Science and Technology] is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

You are asked to participate in the study as you are a educational policy maker. The number of participants will be decided by the data saturation technique after the researcher knows that enough data has been generated.

What does participation involve for you?

If you choose to take part in the project, this will involve you being involved in a semi structured interview with me. It will take approximately 45 minutes. The semi-structured interview includes questions about your current and future aspirations and the use of church education and formal schooling to achieve this. *Your answers will be recorded electronically.*

It will be information about how formal schooling and church education will be useful in realizing children's aspirations. I will record the interview and take notes.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

The project supervisor will have access to the personal data. I will replace your name and contact details with a code. Data will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end *[June 2023]*. *Your personal data will be digitally recorded using Dictaphone and anonymized at the end of the project.*

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:
access the personal data that is being processed about you.
request that your personal data is deleted.
request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified.
receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with *[Norwegian University of Science and Technology]*, Data Protection Services has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

The supervisor for the project is Professor Anne Trine Kjørholt, Department of Education and Lifelong Learning, Norwegian University of Sciences and Technology, 126 Paviljong A Loholt allé 85 Dragvoll, Trondheim, Norway, Tlf 73596241 (Office)

Our Data Protection Officer: [Thomas Helgesen, Director Organization, and Infrastructure, thomas.helgesen@ntnu.no, +47 93079038, Sluppenveien 12B/C, Mollenberg 4etg, Trondheim]

Data Protection Services, by email: (personverntjenester@sikt.no) or by telephone: +47 53 21 15 00.

Yours sincerely,



Project Leader

Student (if applicable)

(Researcher/supervisor)

Consent Statement

I have received and understood information about the project [*indigenous education and changing aspirations of children in Ethiopia*] and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in *discussions with you about schooling*
- for information about myself to be published in a way that I cannot be recognised, that is, my anonymity will be preserved.*
- to share the data about the educational policy design and the new educational roadmap of the Ethiopia and on-going discussion on about it*

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. [*June 2023*]

(Signed by participant, date)

Appendix 11: Guide for Focus Group Discussion with Children

Objective

To explore how indigenous education are linked/respond to their aspirations.

How many children?

Group of children at a time. This does not include children who are not attending both formal schooling and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo church education. Because there may be children who are not enrolled in schools. There is no other criterion of selection except this.

How many researchers?

At least one.

How long will it take?

About 20 minutes.

What equipment do I need?

Informed consent forms
Envelopes

What do I do?

1. Introduce the objective of the group discussion.
2. Welcome and express gratitude to participants.
3. Introduce myself.
4. Explain the purpose of data collection and how it will be used.
5. Explain what is expected of participants, including length of discussion.
6. Ask for permission to take notes and tape record the discussion.
7. If you have any questions, please feel free to forward it!
8. Thank children.

What questions I pose:

1. What knowledge do you gain from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church education? How can this knowledge be used for better lives in the future?
2. What do you want to be doing in the future (after competing schooling, church education....? Why? What will you need to make this happen? Who can help you?
3. What do you imagine you will be doing after completing your formal schooling?
4. Please tell me how formal schooling affects your future, for better or worse?
5. Do you feel that subjects that you study in Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church have any influence on your aspirations? If yes, how? If not, why?

Appendix 12: Checklist for Children's Individual Imaginative Drawings of Their Aspiration

Objective

To explore how indigenous education are linked/respond to their aspirations.

How many children?

One child at a time. This does not include children who are not attending both formal schooling and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo church education. Because there may be children who are not enrolled in formal schooling. There is no other criterion of selection except this.

How many researchers?

At least one.

How long will it take?

About 30 minutes.

What equipment do I need?

Informed consent forms

Envelopes

What do I do?

1. Introduce the objective of the drawing.
2. Welcome and express gratitude to participants.
3. Introduce myself.
4. Explain the purpose of data collection and how it will be used.
5. Ask for permission to take notes and tape record the participants explanation of their drawings.
6. If you have any questions, please feel free to forward it!
7. Thank children.

What a Child Draw:

1. Draw what you aspire to in the future?
2. Draw how yeabnät education helps what you aspire to in the future?
3. What can you tell me about this drawing?

Appendix 13: Ethical Clearance from Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD)



[Notification form](#) / [Indigenous education and changing aspirations of children in Ethiopia](#) / Export

Notification Form

Reference number

128428

Which personal data will be processed?

- Name (also with signature/written consent)
- Photographs or video recordings of people
- Sound recordings of people
- Background data that can identify a person

Describe which background data that can identify individual persons you will be processing

Age and gender

Project information

Project title

Indigenous education and changing aspirations of children in Ethiopia

Project description

It explores how modern education needs to be rethought and knowledge and learning are reimagined indigenously to make it responsive to the aspiration of children

Explain why it is necessary to process personal data in the project

The personal data will be useful to examine whether boys or girls most commonly attend both formal schooling and Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo church education.

Project description

[NSD application \(brief description\).pdf](#)

External funding

Ikke utfyllt

Type of project

Student project, Master's thesis

Contact information, student

Dawit Kassa, dawitk@stud.rtn.no, tlf: +4743524730

Data controller

Data controller (institution responsible for the project)

Høgskolen i Østfold / Fakultet for lærerutdanning og språk / Institutt for pedagogikk, IKT og læring

Project leader (academic employee/supervisor or PhD candidate)

Anne Trine Kjørholt, anne.trine.kjorholt@ntnu.no, tlf: 73596241

Will the responsibility of the data controller be shared with other institutions (joint data controllers)?

No

Sample 1

Describe the sample

Students

Describe how you will recruit or select the sample

The boys and girls will be recruited through my first contact with the authorities of the traditional schools in the Ethiopian Orthodox church both in Adama and Addis Ababa cities. The only selection criteria is whether the boy or girl is enrolled both in formal schooling and in Ethiopian Orthodox church traditional schools.

Age

13 - 15

Personal data relating to sample 1

- Name (also with signature/written consent)
- Photographs or video recordings of people
- Sound recordings of people
- Background data that can identify a person

How will you collect data relating to sample 1?

Personal interview

Attachment

[Children \(NSD\).pdf](#)

Legal basis for processing general categories of personal data

Consent (General Data Protection Regulation art. 6 nr. 1 a)

Who will give consent for children under 16 years?

Parents/guardians

Information for sample 1

Will you inform the sample about the processing of their personal data?

Yes

How?

Written information (on paper or electronically)

Information letter

[information_letter-2 \(for CHILD\).pdf](#)

Sample 2

Describe the sample

Parents, schoolteachers, church educators and education policy makers

Describe how you will recruit or select the sample

I will contact the parents through their children after getting consent from the Ethiopian Orthodox church authorities to sample the study participants. But, I will contact church educators, school teachers, and policy makers via my previous contacts as well as submit formal letters from NTNU.

Age

18 - 65

Personal data relating to sample 2

- Name (also with signature/written consent)
- Sound recordings of people

How will you collect data relating to sample 2?

Personal interview

Attachment

[Adults \[NSD\].pdf](#)

Legal basis for processing general categories of personal data

Consent (General Data Protection Regulation art. 6 nr. 1 a)

Information for sample 2

Will you inform the sample about the processing of their personal data?

Yes

How?

Written information (on paper or electronically)

Information letter

[information_letter-2 \[for ADULT\].pdf](#)

Third Persons

Will you be processing data relating to third persons?

Yes

Describe the third persons

Interviewees' brothers, sisters, and neighbors. Note that the interviewees would not be asked to share sensitive issues about their brothers and sisters; even the transmitted data will be anonymized.

Type of data relating to third persons

Which sample will give information relating to third persons?

- Sample 1: Students

Will third persons consent to the processing of their data?

No

Will third persons receive information about the processing of their data?

No

Explain why third persons will not be informed

Because the participants are asked to provide information only about whether their brothers, sisters, and friends attend the Ethiopian Orthodox school or not. No other further detailed information about them.

Documentation

How will consent be documented?

- Manually (on paper)

How can consent be withdrawn?

For whatever reason that may be, I would assure them they are entitled to withdraw from the research process while they are not feeling well.

How can data subjects get access to their personal data or have their personal data corrected or deleted?

The participants will be asked to check that the information they provide is correct. I will read them to see if their data is correctly documented. I will give them the details of my address and how to contact me whenever they want to see their personal data.

Total number of data subjects in the project

1-99

Approvals

Will you obtain any of the following approvals or permits for the project?

ikke utfyllt

Processing

Where will the personal data be processed?

- Mobile device belonging to the data controller

Who will be processing/have access to the collected personal data?

- Student (student project)

Will the collected personal data be transferred/made available to a third country or international organisation outside the EU/EEA?

No

Information Security

Will directly identifiable data be stored separately from the rest of the collected data (e.g. in a scrambling key)?

Yes

Which technical and practical measures will be used to secure the personal data?

- Personal data will be anonymised as soon as no longer needed

Duration of processing

Project period

15.07.2022 - 27.06.2023

What happens to the data at the end of the project?

Personal data will be stored temporarily until: 27.06.2023

What is the purpose of further storage?

Research purposes

Where will the collected personal data be stored?

Internal to the data controller

Will the data subjects be identifiable (directly or indirectly) in the thesis/publications from the project?

No

Additional information

I have not included some of the methods which I will develop while conducting the semi-structured interview, such as focus group discussions, individual imaginative drawing, ranking, storytelling, and dialogue approaches. I have merged the information sheet and consent form of adult participants.

Other attachments

[NSD application FULL proposal.pdf](#)

Assessment of processing of personal data

Reference number

128428

Assessment type

Standard

Date

20.07.2022

Project title

Indigenous education and changing aspirations of children in Ethiopia

Data controller (institution responsible for the project)

Høgskolen i Østfold / Fakultet for lærerutdanninger og språk / Institutt for pedagogikk, IKT og læring

Project leader

Anne Trine Kjørholt

Student

Dawit Kassa

Project period

15.07.2022 - 27.06.2023

Categories of personal data

General

Legal basis

Consent (General Data Protection Regulation art. 6 nr. 1 a)

The processing of personal data is lawful, so long as it is carried out as stated in the notification form. The legal basis is valid until 27.06.2023.

[Notification Form](#) 

Comment

Data Protection Services has assessed the change registered on 09.07.2022.

We find that the processing of personal data in this project is lawful and complies with data protection legislation, so long as it is carried out as described in the Notification Form with dialogue and attachments.

The change includes a new end date for the processing of personal data (27.06.2023), and a new project leader (Anne Trine Kjørholt). The information letters have been updated in accordance with the changes.

FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROJECT

We will follow up the progress of the project underway (every other year) and at the planned end date in order to determine whether the processing of personal data has been concluded/is being carried out in accordance with what is documented.

Good luck with the project!



 **NTNU**

Norwegian University of
Science and Technology