Factors Affecting the Study of *Qiné* in Ethiopian Orthodox Church Schools

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Abstract: *Qiné*, poetry of double meaning, figuratively known as 'wax and gold', has been a core component of traditional Church education in Ethiopia. It is nurtured by *qiné* schools that are tucked away in different corners of the country. Researchers have dwelt on other levels of church education (e.g. the *nebab bet*- 'house of reading') specially from the pedagogical perspective, but relatively little attention has been given in this regard to *qiné* schools. Using a conceptual guide comprising a blend of selected components from models of school effectiveness developed by Scheerens (1990) and Creemers (1994), the study attempted to analyze the factors that undergird and regulate the workings of *qiné* schools and to reflect on their implications for present-day schools. The conceptual guide included: context, school-level characteristics, student and teacher attributes, teaching-learning method and learning outcome. A documentary and archival information served as the main resource materials for the study. The analysis identified socio-cultural and state support, conducive school climate, unflagging student motivation, exalted teacher prestige and intense reflection as instrumental in enhancing the work of *qiné* schools. The limitations of such schools include student stress, insufficient instructional aid, ill-defined duration of study and absence of clear-cut and common standard for student certification. Implications of the study for modern schools are highlighted.

Key terms: *Qiné school*, Ethiopian church education, church school, traditional education

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Introduction

Traditional education in Ethiopia comprises Church and Qoran schools. The Orthodox Church schools, sometimes called 'priest schools', have been active for hundreds of years in the various parts of the country, especially in the north. The schools have been the mainstay of literacy and advanced liturgy. Church education encompasses different schools or '*bet*s' (sing. '*bet*' literally meaning 'house'). Among others, these include: *Nebab bet* (study of the Geez alphabet and reading lessons in Geez without knowing their meaning), *Zema bet* (study of church music), *qiné bet* (study of church poetry), and *Metshaf bet* (study of holy books and philosophy). Some authors (eg. Girma, 1967) find it reasonable to assume that some kind of church education started as early as the fourth century AD following the introduction of Christianity to the country. The advent of *qiné* is traced back to Saint Yared (6th century) who was also the composer of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church religious music (Chaillot, 2002). *Qiné* developed significantly beginning the 15th century with the emergence of a number of pioneering teachers (Aklilu, 2017; Chaillot, 2002).

So, the system of church education has a long tradition in terms of philosophy, liturgy and teaching.

The objectives, curricula and student life in traditional church schools have been described by some authors (e.g. Kidanemariam, 1954 EC; Habtemariam, 1963 EC; Girma, 1967; Haile Gabriel 2007 EC), but apparently little has been written about the environmental, institutional and individual factors the affect teaching learning at different levels of church education, including *qiné* schools.

Purpose of the study

The traditional church schools have been heavily criticized for their emphasis on memorization, particularly in the *Nebab bet* (Girma, 1967; Haile Gabriel, 2007 EC; Bruh, 2010 EC). Such criticism has eclipsed a

careful examination of the set-up, partnerships and teaching learning processes at higher levels. The present study focuses on one of these levels, namely *qiné* school - a high level school which has gathered considerable appeal as a training ground of creative and sublime poetry. The questions that the study attempts to answer include: What are the main features of *qiné* schools in terms of social background, quality of teachers and other characteristics (eg. quality of students)? How do the different factors that emanate from these features influence the teaching/learning in the schools? What are the implications of the *qiné* school traditions for modern schools? Answers to these questions help to find out if there are traditions or conditions in traditional church education that are also useful for modern schools, and if there are ways in which church school education could be enhanced further.

In the context of the traditional church education, "school" refers mainly to an outdoor site of educational provision which encompasses just one class under a teacher who usually stays in the same capacity for a long time or for an indefinite period. "Qiné" refers to verses that convey two meanings in the same grammatical structure, i.e., the 'wax' (the outer or the surface) and the 'gold' (the inner or the embedded).

As indicated earlier, church education has a long tradition. It would therefore be a daunting task to investigate in one study church education as a whole; hence the focus on *qiné* school. Even then, it should be pointed out that the teaching/learning of *qiné* can differ depending on the locality and material resources of the school, the qualification of the teachers, the number of students, etc. So, the present study should not be regarded as comprehensive and applicable to all sites of *qiné* education.

The study uses the masculine pronoun in referring to the students of *qiné* schools because the large majority of them have been boys, but it should be acknowledged that there were many female *qiné* students, a few of whom turned out to be distinguished teachers of *qiné*[1].

Background Literature in Brief

Traditional church education has been studied by many authors (eg. Haile Gabriel, 2007 EC). However, apparently there is no study that focused on factors that influence *qiné* education. So, in the brief review that follows attention was given to the largely descriptive literature that is relevant to *qiné* education.

Kidanemariam (1954 EC) dealt with the features of church education at different levels, including *qiné* school. Among others, he describes the travails of church school students and cites the different types of support church schools obtained from different sources. Teshager (1959) focused on the life of the church school students in general. Admasu (1963 EC) dwelt on the nature and types of *qiné*. Girma's study (1967) gave emphasis to the purpose of church education in general and its limitations. In a sizeable appendix, Mersie Hazen (1999 EC) presented many types of *qiné* that were produced by different composers. Imbakom (1970) treated the different levels of church education along with the lives of the teachers and the students, but his account regarding *qiné* schools is limited. Haile Gabriel (2007 EC) gave a description of the varieties of *qiné* but only a brief account of the teaching–learning processes in *qiné* schools. Aklilu (2017) outlined the development of *qiné* education, and described the different types of *qiné* together with the benefits of studying *qiné*. In one way or another, the above-mentioned literature contributes to an understanding of *qiné* education, but they provide little by way of isolating and examining the factors that influence the work of *qiné* schools.

The literature indicates some salient characteristics of church education, including *qiné*. Regarding the social support given to the church schools, it seems considerable, encompassing supplies by the community and assistance by the state. However, the type and amount of support provided to qiné teachers differed from place to place (Habtemariam, 1963 EC; Aklilu, 2017; Zelalem, 2019)**.** Concerning the physical setting of *qiné* schools the over-riding concern in the choice of place of teaching

seemed to be proximity to a religious establishment (church, monastery) and availability of shade, although there is some variation in the information about the matter. According to Haile Gabriel (1976), classes were usually conducted 'under communal huts'. Other sources (eg. EOC, 2001; Zelalem, 2019) indicate that they were held mainly under trees near churches, or in some cases in the compound of the teachers. The available literature does not indicate existence of furniture (chairs or desks) in the site of instruction or the use stationery in the teaching/learning process.

Pertaining to student and teacher characteristics, the most outstanding quality of both the students and the teachers was their dedication to *qiné* (Aklilu, 2017). Some students travelled to faraway places in search of *qiné* education without telling their parents about their intentions for fear that their parents may restrain them from going (Zelalem, 2019). Students spend most of the day concentrating on their studies and begging for food, with little or no time for relaxation (Tibebu, 2018). Teachers admitted to their school students who could be at various stages of *qiné* study (Aklilu, 2017) and nurtured them as far they could although handling such a heterogeneous class was challenging.

In terms of curriculum, apparently the objectives of *qiné* lessons were not communicated in writing. However, Aklilu (2017) has noted that the study of *qiné* aimed at enhancing the development of reflective thinking and creativity. Such competence involved exquisite expression of a wide spectrum of biblical, historical and social phenomena. To Haile Gabriel (1976), the purpose of teaching *qiné* was mainly to train people that can carry out church rituals. The main aspects of the syllabi of *qiné* schools have been listed by many authors (eg. Habtemariam, 1963 EC) but as in the case of *gesesa* (verb conjugation), it is up to the teacher to choose the specific content that should be presented to the students. Time allocation for each component of the syllabus, as we know it in modern education, is not apparent in the curriculum. The time spent on individual components of the curriculum (e.g. *zerefa*) is subject to the ability of each student (Mersie Hazen, n.d; EOC, 2001). The evaluation of student *qiné*

at each stage of the study (eg. *Etanemoger*) depends on the teacher's verdict which is normally "pass" or "repeat" (Haile Gabriel, 1976).

Overall, one glaring aspect of *qiné* schools that has received little or no attention relates to the factors that contribute to student achievement. For instance, *qiné* students have to endure many difficulties including hunger and illness (Tibebu, 2018). However, it is not clear why the students show high persistence in their studies in a condition of adversity. To give another example, some authors (eg. Imbakom, 1970) have stated that a *qiné* teacher is supported by *asqetsay* or *tekebay*. Pedagogically speaking, how far and in what ways does the involvement of the teacher assistants promote student progress? The present analysis addresses such kinds of gaps.

Framework for the Study

There exist various models for investigating educational provision and their effectiveness at school level. The models and their components that were considered for the present study include: Walberg's Educational Productivity Model (1984) comprising *Aptitude, Instruction, Environment and Learning;* Carroll's Model of School Learning consisting of *Aptitude, Opportunity to Learn, Perseverance, Quality of Instruction and Ability to Understand Instruction;* Scheerens' Context-Input-Process Model involving *Context, Input, (including parental support), Process at school and class level, and Output; and* Creemers' Model of Educational Effectiveness encompassing *Context, School, Instruction, Teacher Characteristics, Student Characteristics and Achievement.*

In spite of their important components, the four models presented above have some limitations. Carroll's model overlooks environmental factors. Walberg fails to clearly indicate the influence of teacher quality and socio-cultural context on learning although it pinpoints the affective, cognitive and behavioral aspects of learning. On the other hand, Scheerens and Creemers offer a more comprehensive treatment of factors including Context, Teacher and Student Characteristics, Parental

support, and class-level processes. However, some of the elements in Scheerens' model do not appear sound (e.g. considering 'curriculum content' as a process of instruction). Creemers' model does not directly relate learner characteristics to 'instruction'. In view of these observations, it was decided to use a succinct and judicious amalgam of selected components from the two models to guide analysis in the present study. The components are: Context, School Characteristics, Student and Teacher Characteristics, Teaching/learning Process, and Learning Outcome.

Methodology

Sources of Information

The major source of information was a one-hour documentary produced by *Mahibere Kidusan* (association of "angelic messengers") under the guidance of the Holy Synod of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.[2] The documentary covers, step-by-step, the teaching-learning processes at Debre Elias *Qiné* School in Gojam – historically, one of the most illustrious *qiné* schools in the country. Although other *qiné* teachers were involved in the documentary, the teacher who was filmed while conducting the various levels of *qiné* lessons was a*qiné* expert who had 40 years of experience in teaching *qiné.* In addition, the narration in the documentary and the relevant images were highly synchronized, and the images were vivid and informative.[4]

Archival information that was consulted included writings by highly knowledgeable authors of the traditional church education including *Liqe Siltanat* Habtemariam and *Aleka*Imbakom. Supplementary information (for filling gaps and for counterchecking) was also collected through interview with *qiné* experts at Addis Ababa University and the Theological College of the Holy Trinity in Addis Ababa, one from each institution. The experts were purposefully selected upon the advice of academic staff in the institutions with the view to identify well-qualified informants with regard to *qiné*.[5]

Method of Analysis

The analysis adapted the Academic Video Online (AVO) approaches suggested by Figueroa (2008) and Barron & Engle (2007) which included framework for interpretation and intensive examination of the whole material (Figueroa, 2008) and play-by- play or episode-by-episode interpretation of the AVO (Barron & Engle, 2007). Accordingly, first the researcher viewed the documentary in totality to understand the context in which it was developed, the sequence of episodes and the interactions in the process of teaching/learning.

The researcher then proceeded to the description of each component of the research framework using primarily the content of the documentary but also the other sources of information as supplementary. Finally, the descriptions were analyzed from the pedagogical perspective with a view to detect factors that emanate from them. The analysis involved environmental and participant attributes, the types of interactions among participants, and the quality of student learning. Research findings that relate to effective pedagogical practice were invoked at various points to reinforce the analysis.

The *Qiné School*: A Snapshot

The following description is provided along the five components selected above (Context, School Characteristics, etc.) for investigating the conditions and activities of *qiné* schools.

Context

The overview of 'Context' includes the historical, socioeconomic and cultural background of *qiné* schools.

The historical background of traditional *qiné* schools (like all other schools of church education) bespeaks a reciprocal relationship with the ruling class (Aklilu, 2017, p. 78)[6]. The Orthodox Church anointed

monarchs during coronations; it prayed for the well-being and longevity of the monarchs in its daily mass; its clergy served as chronicles, clerks and *nefsabat* (literally 'soul father') for the ruling class, including the nobility. The rulers on their part granted sizeable land to the Church, reduced taxes from the clergy, or granted revenues (EOC, 1938 EC), built churches, donated accoutrements of religious ritual (mitre, crosier or crosses, vestments, headwear and other clerical wear), encouraged communities to send their children to church schools, provided *dirgo* (upkeep handout) to church school students, andpaid salary to church appointees. Occasionally or in selected sites, the clergy, including *qiné* teachers, received salaries and awards from rulers (Kidanemariam, 1954 EC, pp. 32 & 79). In general, the state and the nobility supported the church and its schools and accorded them significant status.

Among the rural people there were three main avenues for attaining high status in their communities. One was to distinguish oneself as a soldier or warrior. The second one was to get married into the family of the nobility or the rich. The third option was to advance in church education and obtain an appointment as a cleric. This third option attended to both material and spiritual needs, and it probably lent impetus to church education.

The socio-cultural context of traditional church education (including *qiné*) was marked by low-income and largely agricultural communities who were devotees of the Orthodox religion. They strictly adhered to church dogma and the teachings of the Church. They were highly conservative in the sense of maintaining their traditions and beliefs. To them, the Church was the source of spiritual nourishment and hope. It was the spiritual custodian of their families which mediated between them and divine powers for the resolution of their troubles. The clergy baptized their children, presided and blessed the newly married as in *yeteklilgabicha* (marriage for life), conducted the Eucharist on various solemn occasions, exorcised evil spirits and prayed for the dead. The people went to church not just to pray but also to commemorate monthly holidays named after saints, angels, apostles, prophets, etc and to offer

humble offerings to the Church. Generally, the communities were respectful to church school teachers because they attended to their spiritual needs.

For reasons indicated above, generally parents were interested to send their children to church schools. However, when it came to schools located far from home, many parents were reluctant to do so at least partly due to their need for a helping hand at home (Zelalem, 2019). Their reluctance was, however, circumvented by youthful eagerness of their children, some of whom run away from home to join *qiné* schools in far-off places just like their peers, possibly anticipating the material benefits and heeding the admonishment of the Holy Scriptures which posited that young men that seek "spiritual wisdom" should not surrender to the temptation of sticking around the home (Kidanemariam, 1954 EC, p. 24).

In general, the political and socio-economic stetting of church education, including *qiné* schools, was supportive, and church education was regarded as a career opportunity and a means to gain social status. Parents living around *qiné* schools and the general community provided whatever support they can from their meager resources so that their children as well as children coming from far off places in search of education can attend *qiné* and other levels of church schools, and that teachers of church or *qiné* schools, who lead a humble life, do not discontinue their service for lack of sustenance (Aklilu, 2017, p.77; Kidanemaraiam, 1954, p. 78; Tibebu, 2018).

School Characteristics

The *qiné bet* is a prestigious house of learning, and composing *qiné* is one of the highly prized skills in church education. Its graduates are articulate in Geez and experts in the brain- teasing skill of composing poetry in accordance with the established tradition of the church. Teacher high expectation permeates the school. There are no written codes of conduct for the schools, but order and discipline reign in the school in the form of strict adherence to traditional practices concerning

with-in class behavior and outside class activities. Located next to a church or monastery, the school setting is imbued with religious and academic ambience.

Normally, the students live in a cluster of small poorly-furnished thatched huts near the school. Each hut is sometimes shared by a group of students (Teshager, 1959). There are no chairs, tables or beds in the huts (at least in the earlier periods). The students sleep on mats or similar materials spread on the earthen floor. There is no potable water or electricity around the huts or the school. All students are dressed in the same humble form, e.g. toga-like outer garment and animal skin. Generally, the relationship among the students is mutually supportive in terms of helping one another in their studies, sharing provisions collected from the villages, attending to fellow students during illness, etc. (Tibebu, 2018). They all singularly pursued the same goal, i.e., achieving recognition as *bale qiné* (*qiné* expert).

Often classes are conducted under the shade of trees in the open air (EOC, 2001 EC). The seating arrangement of the students may vary from one school to another or even within the same school at different times. In many of the schools, students sit in a semi-circle in auditorium style with the teacher sitting in front of them a few feet away. In other cases, the students crowd in front of the teacher squatting or sitting on the ground in no particular shape (EOC, 2001; Tibebu, 2018). During the teaching session, an *asqetsay*, an advanced student, stands in front of the teacher and echoes the lessons delivered by him. There is some kind of structure (chair, stool, bench, etc.) for the teacher but there is no furniture for the students. There is no blackboard. The teacher and the students do not carry writing materials. Classes are held every day except on Saturday afternoon, Sunday and holydays and the last week of Lent (Imbakom, 1970, p. 6).[7] There is no roll call although students are expected to come to class in the morning and afternoon as per the instruction of the teacher. According to Zelalem (2019), at least in some cases, the teacher assigns specific students to monitor attendance.

The temperature around the school is generally cool during the dry season, but may get hot in some areas during the dry season. The environs can be quite cold during the rainy season (Yitbarek, n.d., p.17). Normally, the site is free from noise or interference from the surrounding areas.

In brief, the school is a center of unassuming well-knit learning community with very modest boarding quarters and class setting.

Student and Teacher Characteristics

The *qiné* student evinces high motivation for learning, partly due to the value the community attaches to his study and partly due to his aspiration to become a learned man.   He also envisages job opportunities. He realizes that he could be employed in government offices or in the church as clerk, administrator, teacher, composer, advisor, etc (Haile Gabriel, 2007 EC, p. 41; Maaza, 1967). His motivation is enhanced by the fact that, more often than not, he joins the school or teacher of his own choice. He is focused on his studies day and night, allowing no attraction to interfere with his engagements. He realizes that he has to delay gratification of his impulses and wishes, casting away any notion of immediate results or benefits from his academic efforts.

The *qiné* student realizes that he himself has to manage his life and studies; his parents or guardians cannot supervise his daily activities. Self-control, perseverance and hardiness characterize his behavior. Generally, in spite of the benefits of being part of a learning community, he feels that, at the end of the day, he himself is going to be responsible for his achievements or failures.

The teacher of *qiné* is a learned man capable of attracting students from different corners of the immediate surroundings and beyond. He enjoys high respect in his community on account of his expertise and self-discipline. Aklilu G. (1965, p. 8) goes further and states that some teachers did not request payment for their services heeding the Biblical

command: ዋጋ ሳትከፍሉ የተማራችሁትን ያለዋጋ አስተምሩ' ("You learned free of charge; teach free of charge." Or, as stated in Mathew 10.8, "Freely you have received; freely give."). The communities as well as students regard the teacher as the father of intellectual growth (*yeqlemabat*) deserving the treatment due to all fathers. Typically, he lives an austere life in a hut or house near the school, drawing sustenance from the sale of small artifacts which he may produce, material support (often some kind of commodity) from the surrounding community and from revenue collected from land granted to the church (Haile Gabriel, 2007 EC, p.70).

The *qiné* teacher plays multiple roles. He is both a teacher and administrator at the same time. He decides on requests for admission to his school. He is the sole dispenser of sanctions. He counsels students, as he deems it necessary. He is the certifier at graduation from the school. At times, he even goes further and advises graduating students to raise their competence under another *qiné* teacher of greater renown. In brief, the *qiné* teacher is a veritable model of learning and head, teacher, counselor and administrator of the *qiné* school (Kidanemariam, 1954 EC; Imbakom, 1970).

The Teaching/Learning Process: A Glimpse

The teaching of *qiné* comprises a graduated series or forms of *qiné* composition or epigrams: *gubaeqana* (a two-line verse), *ze'amlakiye* (a three-line verse), *nebezhu* (three -line verse), *kibriti* (four-line verse), *wazema* (five-line verse), *Selassie qiné*(a six-line verse), *zeyi'eze* (a three or five line verse but according to Haile Gabriel- a five or six line verse); and *mewedes* (an eight line verse).[8]

According to EOC (2001 EC), each type of *qiné*is taught in a process involving a number of phases. The phases include *gesesa* (conjugation), *zerefa* (composition of *qiné*by the teacher), *tirgum* (explanation of the *qiné*by the teacher), *tireka* (narration of event or situation), *qotera*(composition of *qiné*by individual students), and *negera* (presentation of *qiné* to the teacher)[9].

Gesesa is a fundamental aspect of *qiné* instruction because it is the process through which students learn Geez - the language they use in composing *qiné*. According to Aklilu (2017, p. 58), *gesesa* deals with verb conjugation, declension, sentence construction, etc. Judging from the writings of Addis (2009 EC), Desta, *et al* (2011) and Aklilu (2017), *gesesa* is a complex process in which a verb takes a multitude of forms.

According to EOC (2001 EC), in teaching *gesesa*, the teacher first pronounces a Geez verb, while the students sit in front of him or on the sides. In a crowded class, some students may recline on some object (fence, tree, etc) Then a *teqebay*, an advanced student selected by the teacher, who stands in front of the teacher, repeats what the teacher said and interprets it. Following that the teacher conjugates the verb in Geez. The *teqebay* repeats the conjugation and translates it. Thereafter the rest of the class repeats the conjugation aloud.

In *zerefa*, the teacher composes a *qiné* using the verb he conjugated earlier with all its linguistic trappings. He enunciates the *qiné*in segments so that the teqebay gets time to repeat each segment vocally. He does these two or three times with every *qiné*. The *teqebay* recites the *qiné* until the teacher confirms that the *teqebay* has accurately reproduced it. Then the *teqebay* recites the *qiné* audibly multiple times so that each of the other students can repeat it and commit it to memory. Students who have not grasped the *qiné can* consult another student for help. Often, while sitting in class, students cluster around a good student who serves as tutor (an *asqetsay*) to facilitate such consultation. Continuing the lesson, in *tirgum*, the teacher elaborates on the *qiné* by translating it into Amharic, pointing to the wax and gold, delineating its linguistic features, and unveiling its Biblical or other basis. Again the *teqebay* repeats after the teacher, part by part. The other students listen intently with a view to capture the essentials or the patterns in the composition of *qiné*.

In *tireka*, the teacher narrates or describes an event or a situation from the Holy books, the country's history, the cultural milieu or from life events in general. He may also recount the deeds of a saint, an apostle,

an angel or some other holy entity to be commemorated the next day. To quote from the documentary**: "መምህሩ የሕዝብ አነነርንና ስርዐቶችን ፤ ልምዶችን ይናገራሉ ፤ ይተርካሉ ። አንዳንዴ መምህሩ በማግስቱ ስለሚዉለዉ ቅዱስ ወይም ሰማዕት ሕይወት ወይም ተአምር …. ለተማሪዎቻቹ ይነግሯቸዋል።"** The accounts or statements of the teacher are expected to serve as a basis for formulation of a *qiné* by the students during *qotera*, which comes next.

In *qotera*, often each student hibernates to the surrounding areas (behind trees, bushes or rocks, etc) to ponder on the *qiné* of the teacher in order to fully discern how it was developed and to construct his own qiné with reference to the narration provided by the teacher during *tereka*. He may also work on the *qiné* in his hut. In formulating his *qiné*, the student has to ensure that it comprises wax and gold with the appropriate grammatical structure and conciseness, and that it is deliverable through the suitable melody (*Geez, Ezel* or *Ararai*)[10]. As the documentary puts it: **ለተማሪዉ "ቃላት መምረጡ ፤ በኅት መምታቴና ምጣነዉን ማስተካከሉ …. ወርቁን ከሰሙ፤ ሰሙን ከወርቁ ጋር ማዋሃዱ፤ የቀቆጠረዉን ቅኔ ከዜማ ጋር ማስማማቱ ሊላዉ ፈተናዉ ነዉ።"** Then the student proceeds to *negera* in which he presents his *qiné* to the teacher normally in front of other students. After listening to the student, the teacher asks the student to point out the wax and gold. He also assesses the *qiné* in terms of linguistic form and melody. In case the student's *qiné is* found deficient on these dimensions, the teacher asks the student to amend his *qiné* on the spot. If the student is unable to do so, the teacher recasts the defective *qiné into* an acceptable form, and dispatches the student to attempt another round. Only if the student is able to convince the teacher that he is competent in a given type/level of *qiné* (e.g. *gubaeqana*), through repeated trails if necessary, can a student proceed to the next level (e.g. *zeamlakie*). Alongside his training in school, the *qiné* student also attends church mass specially on Sundays to observe mass in church, and to participate in the proceedings in as much as his competence allows.[11]

Eventually, a student who demonstrates his ability in *mewedes* to the satisfaction of his teacher (after successfully going through all the other stages) is proclaimed a success and he is awarded a graduation certificate in public, sometimes in the presence of his delighted and appreciative parents[12].

Learning Outcome

Qiné schools produce graduates imbued with varieties of competencies and attitudes. The students study Geez in *qiné* school. They also become capable of composing *qiné* of different types with their double meaning, intricacies and elegance. They get used to reflection as an important means of knowledge creation. O'Hanlon (1946, quoted in Haile Gabriel, 2007, p. 41) actually wrote that the *qiné* school graduate has developed his competence in "intelligent thought". In addition, the student acquires a wide repertoire of religious, and historical and socio-cultural knowledge (Bruh, 2010 EC, p. 214.)

Graduates of *qiné* schools become familiar to self- and other-criticism in the formulation of *qiné*. They get accustomed to self-regulation in academic activities. They develop the ability to persevere in the face of difficult living and learning conditions. They learn to study and share with others. In general, the profile of the graduating student qualifies him to serve in ecclesiastical or public positions of various types and levels.

Analysis

The analysis extracts from the aforementioned descriptions those factors that affect the educational process in *qiné* schools without claiming to have covered all aspects of the environmental and instructional features of such schools. In so doing it tries to distinguish between those factors that enhance learning outcome from those which impede it.

Context Factors: Socio-cultural Conditions and State Support

The communities around the school and in the localities from which the students originate (in the case of those come from other places) accord high importance and status to *qiné* expertise and to *qiné* teachers (Tibebu, 2018). The community values *qiné* and other forms of church education because they are social heritages of both secular and spiritual significance. It customarily and compassionately attends to students who daily visit the neighborhood begging for food. The community also contributes to the upkeep of the *qiné* teacher mostly in kind (Kidanemariam, 1954; Habtemariam, 1963EC; Setargaw, 2004).

In some cases, well-to-do parents send their children to *qiné* school with their blessings and whatever they can afford to give them by of provision. At least in principle, parents are proud to have someone in the family who can perform or oversee family religious functions, and in case the father is a priest, to have someone from the family who "picks up the Psalms" (or one who carries on the family tradition).

When a student graduates from *qiné* school, in some cases, parents joyfully attend the ceremony presided by the teacher. The occasion provides a kind of uplift to the social standing of both the student and his family. In fact, in localities that lack church school students, communities deploringly say *bereketraqe* (we have become bereft of heavenly blessings) (Tibebu, 2010 EC). They also feel that their traditions face the risk of discontinuance.

The State support that church schools (including those teaching *qiné*) received was substantial (EOC, 1938 EC; Kidanemariam, 1954 EC)**.** It included land grants, defrayal of living expenses for teachers and providing employment opportunity for graduates. Thus, there was consensual and concerted effort by the State and the community to promote church or *qiné* education.

In spite of the above positive outlooks and actions regarding *qiné* education, the socio-economic context of *qiné* education was short of the optimum conditions for teaching and learning. The amount of financial support acquired from the State or other sources was unclear or indeterminate. The people living around the school were largely low-income communities who, despite their allegiance to *qiné* education, did not have adequate economic resources to help in the supply of the appropriate teaching/learning materials and facilities to *qiné* schools. The prevalence of adult illiteracy and, in the case of many of the students, the fact the school was far from home gave little or room for parents to assist their children in their studies or to closely monitor the educational progress.

Many parents were reluctant to send their children to *qiné* school because of their need for a helping hand around the home and because of their concern for the well-being of their children who study far away from home (Kidanemariam, 1954 EC; Zelalem, 2019). In particular, parents largely shied away from sending their daughters to *qiné* school for different reasons, aside from the need for assistance in domestic chores (Maaza, 1967). These include their concern about the safety of their daughters in unfamiliar and male-dominated environment and religious canon which limits the role of women in conducting church rituals and services.

The support that *qiné* schools gave partly hinged on the relationship between the Church and the State and was susceptible to political and socio-economic changes. For instance, the Socialist system during the Derg regime, being non-sympathetic to religious affairs, had little or no interest in supporting church education. The spread of modern schools, changes in vocational demands and opportunities in the wider society and shortfalls in the income of communities also have repercussion on public support for *qiné* schools.

Factors in School Characteristics

Physically, the school shows an ambience that suits a learning center. It is free of noise, commotion and distractions. It is located in the vicinity of a holy site which lends it a positive social image and stature. This is the kind of serene atmosphere that promotes learning (Maina& Stephen, 2016).Despite their downside of being susceptible to the vagaries of the weather, its open perimeters which were permeated with day light and fresh air produced a psychological atmosphere fit for sober academic engagement.

Concerning the impact of climatic conditions on *qiné* education, research suggests that temperature range $20\text{-}24^0$ C is optimal for learning (Earthman, 2002). Temperature outside this range is likely to result in some form of stress, including physiological discomfort and drowsiness, although the effect may be tempered through adaptation. It can also limit attention span. Such could have been the case in *qiné* schools experiencing hot climate. However, it appears that high temperature is debilitating in the case of complex or challenging tasks but not in the case of simple learning such as repetition (Wyon, 1970). In addition, the effect of high temperature seems to vary depending on the age of learners – being less debilitating among adolescents than among children (Wyon, 1970). Given the fact that the *qiné* school is normally located under a shade or trees in the open space, it would appear that heat does not seriously affect the attention of the students, or their studies in non-reflective activities.

Noise could emanate from the simultaneous vocal rehearsals of students during *gesesa* and similar occasions. In this regard**,** Cecilia, *et al* (2005) suggest that the optimum noise level for classroom instruction is 35-45 dB (close to a 'quiet' level). Higher level sounds are likely to result in irritation and discomfort among learners. Other evidence (Brunetti, 1972 cited in Ahrentzen, 1982, p. 234) suggests that the effect of noise is more debilitating in the case of social conversation than in the case of task-oriented conversation. In addition, 'short term noise does not seem to

affect task performance (Slater, 1968). Nagar & Pandey (1987) have further found that noise affects performance on complex tasks but not on simple tasks. Also, from the social facilitation viewpoint it appears that, with simple tasks in a group situation, co-actors' "pressure" resembling competition can enhance performance (McLeod, 2011). So generally it seems that simple verbal rehearsal of an academic task undertaken by individual students simultaneously is not a major issue in the case of *qiné* classes.

The school climate had quite a few positive features. The school is a house of specialization in an area that is recognized as reputable and challenging. In addition, the leadership of the school is buttressed by the scholarship and ethical conduct of the teacher. These features lend the school an aura of authority and enhance the self-esteem of the students. The students are committed to one and the same purpose - mastering *qiné*. They speak the same language and they are very similar in other cultural characteristics. The students live and learn in the same place akin to the situation in a boarding situation. A newly admitted student has an induction period of a few months during which he is familiarized with life in *qiné* school and exempted from going on daily rounds of *qefefa* (begging for food) (Kidanemariam, 1954 EC, p. 25). The students interact frequently. They have a shared focus and they are caring and responsive to each other (Teshager, 1959; EOC, 2001 EC)– school qualities that are important in creating conducive learning climate (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007). Conducive school climate is also instrumental in promoting student achievement (See, for example, Asrat, 2014). What all this means is that there is a strong sense of identification with the school and its members, and a genuine feeling of belongingness and affiliation. Hence students find it relatively easy to gain mutual understanding and to embrace the values of the school.

However, the school climate is amenable to a few limitations. Lack of appropriate building and facilities reduce its appeal as a learning forum. As indicated by Yitbarek (n.d., p. 21) the open air classes were subject to heat, rain and gusts of wind, all of which can impede

teaching/learning. Lacking offices, amenities, written operational scheme, etc that normally go with the label "school", casual observers will be hard-pressed to accord it the label. By modern standards, it gives the impression of being barren, non-stimulating and dysfunctional.

In spite of their ambience as intellectual and cultural centers, *qiné* schools had little or no depository or archive of the extensive tradition and knowledge in their perimeters. The huge amount of *qiné* orally generated by teachers and students on the site are largely consigned to oblivion thereby denying the school the personality and appeal it has established through the years and the accumulated resources that new students can exploit in their studies.

Factors in Student /Teacher Characteristics

The *qiné* student is positively predisposed to study *qiné* for a number of reasons. First the communities around his own village and around the school accord high importance and status to *qiné* expertise and to *qiné* teachers (Habtemariam, 1963 EC). In particular, parents are proud to have someone in the family who can perform family religious functions, or continue family tradition in playing ecclesiastical role. Second, the student joins a *qiné* school upon his own choice, although in some cases he may be referred to a particular renowned *qiné* teacher by his previous teachers. Third, *qiné* education enhances his religious devotion and personality (Aklilu G., 1965). Fourth, he realizes that success in *qiné* school results in personal benefits (Haile Gabriel, 1976).For instance, he will be qualified to pursue higher level church education and obtain appointments to various ranks along with material benefits such as a plot of land. All these factors contribute to the strengthening of his interest to study *qiné* and to develop a positive attitude towards *qiné* school.

Once in school, the spiritually and academically imposing personality of the teacher helps to sustain the student's motivation to commit himself to the study of *qiné* assiduously. Ordinarily, the teacher is an elderly person who commands considerable respect among the community on

account of his expertise and age. More often than not, he is highly learned, enthusiastic in his lesson delivery, consistent in his conduct and diligent at work. In addition, he is eager to see the success of his students. There is some merit in these teacher qualities. Knowledge of subject-matter has been found to be particularly important in various studies (e.g. Hill, *et al*, 2005). Stronge (2007) has also determined that teacher personality which includes professional enthusiasm and "reflective interaction" are essential for teaching effectiveness. In a meta-analysis of studies dealing with teacher personality, Kim, *et al* (2019) have further concluded that emotional stability and conscientiousness are important qualities for teacher effectiveness.

The students regard the teacher as a father. He is normally very demanding of them and encourages individual competence. Evidence suggests that high teacher expectation enhances student motivation (Eccles, *et al*; 1998; Covington & Dray, 2002).

The *qiné* school student may be characterized by self-regulation in the sense of organizing or sorting out his feelings, ideas and goals, managing his time allocation, avoiding distractions, monitoring his progress, taking responsibility for his own learning and conducting himself in a consistent manner for the attainment of his goal. A review of studies covering primary and secondary schools (Dignath & Butler, 2008 cited in Ramdness & Zimmerman, 2011) indicates that self-regulation of the type just mentioned facilitates learning.

Student discipline benefits from self-regulation in as much as the student adheres to beliefs and practices that are required for individual and institutional success. In *Qiné School*, student discipline further seems to be influenced by filial piety – a cultural orientation which is frequently cited in oriental literature. Filial piety comprises a number of pillars including: obedience, respectfulness to one's family and dedication to sustaining family values (Hui, *et al*, 2011). It appears that in some oriental traditions, a young person's diligence in pursuing his education is a way of compensating parents for upbringing him (Hui, *et al,* 2011).

In reference to discipline, in *qiné* schools, it seems that teacher control, which could be regarded as authoritarian, is unlikely to create antagonism between the student and the teacher in a climate of filial piety, i.e., as long as the student interprets the teacher's management style as fatherly, well-intended or appropriate due to his cultural experiences which sanction such forms of young-adult relations (Ning, *et al*, 2012).

Teacher modeling could have also promoted student discipline. The teacher lives a humble life and tolerates hardships. In so doing, he becomes a model of an academic-cum-religious life style to his students. This role modeling is fostered by the student's daily contact with his teacher, by the behavior of peer learners and by a general attitude among communities who believe that hardship experience fosters resilience. So it is not surprising if *qiné* students show ascetic behavior and do not surrender to adversity in their living and learning conditions.

Teacher characteristics that are important for teaching/learning but that don't seem to be clearly evident in *Qiné School* include respect for individuality, openness and extraversion. Studies have found these qualities to be useful in advancing teaching/learning (Stronge, 2007; Kim, *et al*, 2019). However, in *Qiné School* teacher attention to the needs and interests of individual students appears to be largely limited to the *qotera* session. To elaborate, in *Qiné School*, students of different levels (beginners to advanced levels) study in the same sessions, and the academic progress of low- or intermediate-level students rests mainly on the shoulders of the *asqetsay*. Moreover, on account of their austere and reserved stance it is hard to describe *qiné* teachers as outgoing and proactive in their relations with their students.

The professional status of individual *qiné* teachers is hard to determine since there is no systematic and established method for assigning academic rank to them. Student decision to join a *qiné* school which is managed by a particular teacher rests on some personal assessments by people who know about the teachers, or simply hearsay. A scheme

for determining the professional status of *qiné* teachers helps to promote recognition with regard to the most capable, and to encourage the less capable further develop their competence.

Concerning the students, their poor physical condition and their difficult life probably had a negative bearing on their studies. The students depend on food collected through begging from the surrounding community. When the supply of such food is limited, hunger pang may set in and this condition creates internal noise which competes with their attention to class lesson. Evidence indicates that the well-being of the learner (in terms of diet, for example) is important for optimum academic performance (Chinyoka & Naidu, 2014). Sometimes, students also suffer from different types of illnesses (Setargew, 2004; Tibebu, 2018) and in a situation where they are unlikely to obtain immediate health service at least some of them are likely to go to class in a painful condition – a condition which can severely curtail their attention level. In addition, in many *qiné* schools students attending classes sit on the bare ground, squat, stand or lean on some object – all inducing some degree of discomfort, which again can interfere with attention and information processing. Students may be accustomed to such positions, but such positions can hardly be expected to result in maximum attention and learning.

Factors in the Teaching- Learning Process

According to Douglas and Gifford (2001), socio-petal seating arrangement, which allows greater interaction between teachers and students, promotes learning. Other research (e.g. Koneya, 1976; Stires, 1980) indicates that in traditional (auditorium) seating arrangement the front and middle row in a class are associated with greater learning. In *qiné* school, students have the opportunity to sit close to the teacher and the *teqebay* during *gesesa, zerefa and tireka* sessions and to bunch themselves into clusters for peer learning. So it would appear that the seating positions do not pose major difficulties during instruction as long as the number of students is not large and teacher and the *teqebay*

speak loud enough. Concerns arise, however, about the degree of teacher-student interaction, the absence of student seats, and the limited physical and psychological space for the students attending a class. These conditions can induce various degrees of stress (Ahrentzen, *et al*, 1982). In fact, Ahmad, *et al* (2017) have found that classroom physical environment, including space and facilities, have a significant detrimental effect on student learning, enjoyment of learning and health. Perhaps in *qiné* school the impact of such deficiencies is partially tempered by cultural orientation of the students which influences the way they perceive or feel the deficiencies.

In *gesesa* and *zerefa*, the teacher enunciates the lesson in chunks or segments. In *gesesa*, the *teqebay* repeats the conjugation along with its translation. In *zerefa,* the *teqebay* is allowed to repeat the teacher's *qiné* aloud only when the teacher confirms that the *teqebay* has grasped it fully and accurately. In addition, the *teqebay* reproduces the teacher's *qiné* multiple times. There is pedagogic/didactic merit in all these processes. First, the chunking approach is sound because normally the span of apprehension in information flow is regarded to be 7 ± 2 items (Miller, 1956). Second, in case the teacher's voice is inaudible to some students (and this may be true specially because some of the teachers are aged), the *teqebay* serves as relay (intermediary) teacher. His role becomes even more important due to the fact that the teacher does not use visual aid (including writing) while he teaches. Third and more importantly, getting a second chance to listen to the lessons through the repetitions affords students the opportunity to process or rehearse (probably) sub-vocally what they hear in their working memory - a process that could involve correcting any mishearing or omission.

The *asqetsay* in *qiné* school serves as tutor to students who have difficulty in the lessons. This arrangement facilitates instruction in the form of peer teaching/learning. First, in so far as the *asqetsay* is selected by the teacher to play this coveted role, the appointment lends credibility to his academic stature and creates in the tutee a positive predisposition and expectation in relation to the tutorial. Second, the tutee finds it easy

to identify with or relate to the *asqetsay* due to their common aspiration. They also speak the same language. Third, the tutee is likely to feel more open to expressing his weak spot without fear of the teacher's censure and the *asqetsay* is also likely to see things from the perspective of the tutee. Theoretically, the academic benefits of the tutorial are not limited to the tutee since the tutee may raise questions that impel the *asqetsay* to clearly articulate the subtleties of *qiné and* to device *qiné* that illustrates his response to the tutee's questions or difficulties. Even then, it is hard to say that the *asqetsay* will be able to sufficiently attend to the queries and needs of the tutee. Doing so could require wider knowledge and didactic skills.

The teaching approach in *tirgum* shows a departure from the way *zerefa* was presented. The important feature of the approach is that while the *teqebay* repeats the Geez *qiné* delivered by the teacher earlier, the teacher translates it to Amharic and elaborates on the *qiné* - the wax and gold in the *qiné*and the techniques used to compose it. The translation into Amharic (the mother tongue of many or all of the students) and the explanation about its content and structure make learning meaningful and promote retention. Simultaneously, the teacher is demonstrating the skill of composing *qiné* through modeling.

The teaching style in the case of *qotera* takes the teaching/learning process to greater heights. This is the stage where the student gets individual attention and feedback from the teacher. It offers a chance for the student to test his competence in front of his teacher, identify his weaknesses and strengths and to obtain hints or ideas for his subsequent *qiné*. It is not just meant to simply judge student performance; rather it is meant to provide constructive feedback to enhance learning.

The reflection activity, which is germane in composing *qiné*, is well-attuned to the concept of constructivism that has been discussed and promoted both by theorists and academics in different corners of the world. In the study of *qiné*, the narrations and clarifications by the teacher

during *tereka* refer to the student's cultural background and to community values and practices. So they resonate with his own life experiences and beliefs. They serve as instructional scaffolding for reflection by the student. Through reflection involving the narrations, the *qiné* student develops and shares his own view of spiritual matters, historical events, etc. The subject of reflection, the prompt by the teacher, the reflection itself and the outcome of the reflection (reaching higher levels of cognitive competence) correspond to tenets of Vygotsky's social constructivism (Bruning*et al*, 1995).

An additional observation concerning the student's reflective activities in his hideout is that it is often attended by external self-talk, which is a form of self-test. Self-test in turn is associated with improved performance (Dunlosky, *et al*, 2013). One could also say that the student is engaged in cognitive or thinking apprenticeship which is a mental or intellectual exercise based on one's culture mediated by a more knowledgeable person, i.e., the teacher. Such apprenticeship promotes learning (Rogoff, 1990). In other words, one can argue that the Constructivist approach in teaching/learning was evident in *qiné* schools much earlier than it emerged as a theory in the works of Piaget (cognitive constructivist) and Vygotsky (social constructivist) which visibly came to the fore only in the past seven decades.[13]

The skill of crafting *qiné* also appears to be a product of some form of thinking frame - a construct referring to a 'guide' for mental manipulation and organization of ideas in particular disciplines or areas. Its development benefits from repeated practice, reflection and self-monitoring (Bruning, *et al* 1995, p. 202). The *qiné* student engages in all these activities at the time of *qotera* and beyond. In other words, through the many trials in formulating *qiné*, which contributes to the development of thinking frame, the student acquires the competence of composing *qiné* with the appropriate structure, shades of meaning and melody, ideally without much effort.

Peer teaching is a prominent aspect of *qiné* education, especially in *gesesa* and *zerefa*. Evidently it has been practiced in church schools for a long time before it was recognized and advocated as a useful method of classroom teaching in western literature. (See Gerber & Kauffman, 1981.) Similarly, the importance of practice in transfer and learning, as evidenced in the participation of the student in church Mass, is commonly advocated in educational practice (Salomon & Perkins, 1989, cited in Santrock, p. 305).

The *qotera* session involves sound pedagogical approaches. It includes critical assessment and discussion of both the *qiné* (the outcome) and the way it was devised (the process). This is important because consideration of the process, not just the outcome, is essential for mastery (Schon, 1991 cited in Bruning, *et al*, 1995). The *qotera* session also allows for vicarious learning. It is in these sessions that a student attending presentations of *qiné*by other students pick ups additional ideas or skills that could be useful for composing his own *qiné* or to avoid potential pitfalls in the process of undertaking the task. The fact that *qiné* students identified closely with each other and with the teacher increased the benefits accruing from the vicarious experience (Bandura, 1977).

There are, however, some limitations in the teaching methods normally employed to teach *qiné*. First, the *qiné* teacher uses only oral communication; he does not present the lessons in writing and students do not take notes. The fact that *qiné* students do not take any notes can result in cognitive burden which means that they can process fewer ideas than they could have without the overload. Careful listening is critical. Listening becomes even more important when the class is large or crowded. Second, the teacher does not stand up while delivering lessons. So, he is not in a position to 'control' student attention through eye contact, although he could be vigilant to unwarranted student movement or misconduct. Third, the teacher does not raise questions to the class to determine if students as individuals and as a class are clear with the lesson, to check if they are focusing on the lessons and to

provide help to those who need it. Generally, it appears that the teacher does not attend to individual differences at least at the stage of *gesesa* and *zerefa*. The task is left to the *asqetsay* who tries to perform it as much as he can. Fourth, the teacher may refer to the scriptures but does not employ any audio-visual aid and rarely uses gestures to convey an idea or stress a point, although research (e.g. Shehan, 1987) suggests that audio-visual channel is more effective than auditory channel alone for learning and retention.

Moreover, it seems that individual students do not get the opportunity to ask questions in *zerefa* and *tirgum* sessions. Neither do they get any technique for composing the *qiné,* if in fact such practical techniques exist. Also, the *qotera* session is accompanied by considerable apprehension because of the teacher's well- meaning but relentless analysis of the student's *qiné* (Imbakom, 1970). Evidence posits that high anxiety is specially deleterious in the case of difficult or complex tasks (Gross &Mastenbrook, 1980).

The *qiné* student progresses through his education at his own pace. This is meaningful and helpful as long as the student is sufficiently motivated, exercises self-control and uses appropriate meta-cognitive strategies in his studies. However, the student may be deficient in the last-mentioned competence and that may contribute to a lag in his academic progress. In addition, occasionally he may be subject to distress because of the difficult living conditions, the challenges he faces in his studies and the absence of day-to-day parental support. This kind of situation may also unnecessarily prolong the duration of his studies.

Qiné students do not use writing while composing *qiné* although writing seems to improve problem solving (Bruning, *et al,* 1995). That makes it unnecessarily difficult to monitor themselves as in determining the kinds of processes they went through in a given attempt and the results of that particular attempt. Another issue concerning the approach in composing *qiné* relates to the means-end versus trial and error approaches. Apparently, the student produces *qiné*, at least at the initial level, using

the trial and error approach. However, the means-end approach in problem solving (i.e. breaking down a problem in to segments and assessing one's progress after going through each segment.) is understood to be more effective the trial and error approach. The trial and error approach is likely to render the task more arduous and to induce distress (Tversky & Kahnemann, 1974, cited in Bruning, *et al*, 1995).

The Learning Outcome

From the descriptive literature concerning the competencies and other characteristics of *qiné* school graduates (e.g. O' Hanlon 1946, cited in Haile Gabriel, 2007 EC; Aklilu, 2017), it appears that students who successfully complete *qiné* education develop a variety of positive cognitive, affective and behavioral characteristics, including competence in Geez, self-criticism and diligence. Students acquire the knowledge of Geez and the ability to translate it to the mother tongue. The joy and excitement that attend the creation of *qiné* also become ingrained in the emotional and intellectual life of the graduates.

Qiné school experiences concerning discipline and reflection endow the student with some positive qualities. The *qiné* student develops self-discipline and group affiliation both of which are essential in academic and other types of pursuit. Evidence indicates that self-discipline facilitates academic achievement (e.g. Zhao &Kuo, 2015). Indeed, it could be more important than 'intelligence' in determining academic achievement (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005). Group affiliation also seems to enhance achievement in as much as there is constructive interaction (Nichols & White, 2001). Furthermore, in as far as *qiné* composition involves intense reflection on a wide variety of phenomena; the graduate will probably show a philosophical bent in thinking about human conditions and about life in general without departing from his religious creed.

It may appear that a graduate of *qiné school* who has been subservient to the ideas and guidance of his teacher and reverent to him will end up being a pitifully passive participant in other academic settings as well. This view cannot be taken for granted because, although the student is dutifully respectful to his teacher, he also has the opportunity to engage in an intellectual combat with his teacher during the defense of his *qiné*, the *qotera.*

On a negative note, a *qiné* expert who has developed the habit of expressing his ideas in an intricate manner or hunting for hidden meanings in simple communications runs the risk of introducing ambiguity or confusion in his communications in modern schools. In other words, he can unwittingly disregard two main pillars of academic discourse, namely clarity and conciseness.

The practice of accreditation at selected centers of learning is a pedagogically sound tradition since it helps to ascertain comparable qualification of graduates who emerge from schools scattered in different localities.

The criterion-referenced approach in evaluating student competency in *qiné* is a meaningful procedure because *qiné* education aims at mastery of a skill. However, there is apparently no written standard (list of types of required competencies) for the evaluation, which could mean that, in the regular *qiné* schools (and possibly at accreditation centers[14]), the evaluation is susceptible to various degrees of subjectivity related to teacher qualification and the traditions of individual centers of learning.

Conclusion

The effectiveness and sustenance of traditional *qiné* schools depended on convergent support from the church, the local community and the State. Incongruously, the reluctance of many parents to allow or encourage their children to go to *qiné* schools has to some extent curtailed advancement in that level of church education. But this reluctance of parents to send their children to *qiné* school was offset by

the support provided to the wandering students by the community around the school. This does not mean that the role of parents or guardians in promoting the education of their children can easily be discarded; it only means that, in the absence of visible support by individual parents (as may be the case in the present-day modern schools), the community as a whole can fill a critical gap in educational service.

The school climate was infused with a sense of dedication, cohesiveness and high aspiration (Kidanemariam, 1954 EC; Haile Gabriel, Yellow; Setargew, 2004). Teachers enjoyed considerable respect and students demonstrated a great deal of perseverance in the face of difficult conditions of living and learning. The teaching-learning processes involved peer teaching, and a lot of reflection and intellectual criticism (Gerber & Kauffman, 1981). Students had to be accomplished in composing *qiné* to be certified as graduates of their schools. All these qualities and practices are essential for modern schooling too, but unfortunately, they are mostly missing in the current educational practice. Fixated on foreign theories and practices, we have been unbelievably negligent to capitalize on lessons from our own backyard.

Not surprisingly, *qiné* schools had their own shortcomings. They excessively depended on support from communities whose income was generally low, and a political system that potentially could change or redefine its strong allegiance to church education at any time. Both teachers and students had to survive and work under difficult circumstances. The teaching-learning processes lacked adequate resources, and oral communication prevailed in the schools. Teachers did not get opportunities for training in modern pedagogical methods. No clear standard or criteria existed for student admission, academic ranking of teachers and certification of students in spite of the existence of reputable centers which played a role in the last mentioned. So the *qiné* school tradition, though appreciable on many accounts, needs re-vitalization. Aside from improving the above-mentioned conditions, it could be useful to explore how *qiné* education can be integrated in

academic programs in relation to, for example, creative writing, poetry and literature in general.

Admittedly, the present study does not do sufficient justice to the wide, intricate and rich tradition of *qiné* schools across the country although it provides some ideas about the factors that affected their status, role and achievement. The opportunity for further study in the area is therefore wide open. Future studies concerning *qiné* schools should consider, among others, the variation in the set-up, teaching methods, and learning outcomes of the schools from locality to locality, the trend in enrolment, and more importantly the place of *qiné* in modern life as a professional discipline and as a source of philosophical thoughts.

Notes

[1] These include Emahoy Gelanesh Addis and Emahoy Hiryit Debessu. See, for example, an interview with *Emahoy* Hiryit Debessu, *Ethiopian Herald*, May 12, 2015.

[2]Mahibere Kidusan (2001 EC)*The Ethiopian Orthodox Church Tewahido Schools (AbinetTemehirt)https://www.google.com/search?hl=am&sxsrf=ALeKk0 0yzMKUfqNmTjtycx9DNHg59XbE3w%3A1583571174724*. I am deeply grateful to all those who contributed to the production of the documentary.

There were two other online documentaries with a similar title but they were found to have highly limited content in relation to the teaching/learning processes of *qiné*. The documentaries are Mahibere Kidusan(2011) *Abnetu Yale Abnet Endaiker.* Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEfuYn1r-_8,and Zola Moges (2012), *Ethiopian Orthodox Church Traditional Schools – KineTimhertBetoch*.Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQrLW_LMX5g)

3 Graduates of the school include Abuna Theophlos, statesman and novelist Haddis Alemayehu, and Meri Geta Yoftahe Nigusssie.

4 Carefully crafted documentaries that are available online present a good opportunity for conducting analysis; they minimize the cost of research in terms of time and expenses without compromising authenticity.

5 The informants were Dr. Zelalem Meseret from the Department of Amharic Language, Literature and Folklore in the Addis Ababa University and *Memhir* Tibebu Demissie, a BTh student from the Theological College. Both are graduates of *qiné* schools.

6 The strong support of the State is reflected in a speech presumably by a high-ranking government official or cleric around 1900 highlighting the usefulness of church education for improving one's income and status (Haile Gabriel, 2007 EC). Aleka Lema has gone as far as saying that during the reign of Atse (Emperor) Yohannes, it was only the clergy that owned property (Mengistu, 2003 EC, p. 49).

Thespecial treat provided to *qiné* students is exemplified in the imperial promulgation of AtseAdyamSegedEyasu (17th century ruler) which dictated the following: ለፈደል ተማሪ - እንጀራና ወጥ ፤ ለዘማ ተማሪ - እንጀራና ወጥ ከጠላ ጋር ፤ ለቅኔ ተማሪ - እንጀራና ወጥ ከብረዝ (ከጠጅ) ጋር፤ cited in Aklilu, 2017, p.79).

7 According to Zelalem, there are no classes during Lent as a whole.

8 Accounts differ on the types/forms of *qiné* and the number verses in each type. Habtemariam (1963, p. 172) says there are nine types. Mersie Hazen (2002 EC, p. 243) asserts that there are seven types. Aklilu (2017, p. 59) indicates that there could be as many as 78. In terms of number of verses in a given *qiné* type, Haile Gabriel says that

Nebezhu consists of three long verses and zeyi'eze comprises five or six lines (Haile Gabriel, 2007 EC, p. 346).

[9] The labels *tirgum* and *tireka* were assigned to the two stages by the researcher; the rest are frequently used by the Church.

[10] Melodies of religious music introduced by St. Yared in the sixth century. Normally taught in *Zema* school, the forerunner of *qiné* school.

[11] Haile Gabriel (2007 EC, pp. 38-39) mentions that, following qotera, a *qiné* student goes through two additional phases, namely practice in "agebab" (grammar and sentence construction) and "zerefa (composing *qiné* impromptu).

[12] According to Haile Gabriel (2007 EC, p. 40), the candidate presents his "graduation" *qiné* in a church on a selected holiday. On the same page Haile Gabriel further indicates that a student who graduates from an ordinary *qiné* school needs to go to one of the centers of accreditation to demonstrate his competence if he wishes to become properly qualified (licensed) as a *qiné* teacher.

[13] For example, Piaget's "The Construction of Reality in the Child" was published in 1954. Vygotsky's seminal work ("Mind and Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes") appeared in 1978.

[14] Accreditation centers like Washera, Gonj and Wadla were also *qiné* schools where graduates from other schools may proceed to get recognition or to be 'licensed' by distinguished teachers.

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