

# Ethiopian Stakeholders' Ethnotheories regarding Quality Education

*An exploratory qualitative research on Ethiopian stakeholders' ethnotheories regarding  
quality education and the match with the EDU Q-card*

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*“Quality education is the key to sustainable development and consequently, it is the most sustainable investment”*  
*- Edukans*

## Abstract

Edukans, an international N.G.O., developed the EDU Q-card, a tool that assesses the quality of education in developing countries. The general aim of this study was to address the construct validity of the EDU Q-card by examining Ethiopian stakeholders' ethnotheories regarding quality education and analyzing to what extent these ethnotheories match the main pillars of the EDU Q-card. Based on these findings, indications of the cultural sensitivity of the EDU Q-card could be given. Sixteen semi-structured interviews with Ethiopian stakeholders of quality education were conducted in Addis Ababa and Jima (Ethiopia). The data was analyzed using a qualitative data analysis method. Together, the findings suggested that the five pillars of the EDU Q-card matched the ethnotheories regarding quality education of the Ethiopian stakeholders. This implies that the construct validity of the EDU Q-card could be strong. Therefore, it can also be assumed that the cultural sensitivity of the EDU Q-card could be indicated as strong. However, the Ethiopian stakeholders would prefer the EDU Q-card to be adjusted to their government's education policies. Therefore, it is recommended for Edukans, in order to improve the cultural sensitivity of the EDU Q-card, to combine the five pillars with an emic approach by taking the government policies of a country into account.

*Keywords:* quality education, construct validity, cultural sensitivity, ethnotheories, Ethiopia, Edukans

## Samenvatting

Edukans, een internationale N.G.O., heeft de EDU Q-card ontwikkeld, een instrument dat de kwaliteit van onderwijs in ontwikkelingslanden meet. Het hoofddoel van deze studie was om de constructvaliditeit van de EDU Q-card te adresseren door de etnotheorieën van Ethiopische stakeholders met betrekking tot kwaliteitsonderwijs te onderzoeken en te analyseren in hoeverre deze etnotheorieën overeenkomen met de hoofdpijlers van de EDU Q-card. Op basis van deze bevindingen zouden aanwijzingen met betrekking tot de culturele sensitiviteit van de EDU Q-card kunnen worden gegeven. Zestien semi-gestructureerde interviews met Ethiopische stakeholders van kwaliteitsonderwijs zijn uitgevoerd in Addis Abeba en Jima (Ethiopië). De gegevens zijn geanalyseerd door middel van een kwalitatieve methode. Samengenomen suggereerden de bevindingen dat de vijf pijlers van de EDU Q-card overeenkomen met de etnotheorieën van de Ethiopische stakeholders over kwaliteitsonderwijs. Dit impliceert dat de constructvaliditeit van de EDU Q-card sterk zou kunnen zijn. Daarmee zou ook verwacht kunnen worden dat de culturele sensitiviteit van de EDU Q-card als sterk kan worden beschouwd. De Ethiopische stakeholders geven er de

voorkeur aan dat de EDU Q-card wordt aangepast aan het onderwijsbeleid van hun regering. Daarom wordt Edukans aanbevolen om de vijf pijlers te combineren met een ‘emic’ benadering door rekening te houden met het regeringsbeleid en op deze manier de culturele sensitiviteit van de EDU Q-card te verbeteren.

*Sleutelwoorden:* kwaliteitsonderwijs, construct validiteit, culturele sensitiviteit, ethnotheorieën, Ethiopië, Edukans

## **Ethiopian Stakeholders' Ethnotheories regarding Quality Education**

Education is an essential factor of human development (Federal Ministry of Education Ethiopia (FMOEE), 2015). Children can only prepare for civil life by acquiring the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and values through schooling (UNESCO, 2004). Through an expansion of the public education system, access to education has become less of an issue in most countries of the world. Nevertheless, the quality of education received by students is often substandard (UNESCO, 2015). Consequently, one of the millennium goals of the 'Education For All' global movement led by UNESCO has been to improve the quality of education (UNESCO, 2004). However, due to the growing education system and the change of stakeholders involved in education systems, there is a higher chance of misunderstanding, or disagreement regarding the meaning of quality education and its dimensions (Chapman & Adams, 2002).

'School' may seem to be a straightforward concept. However, apart from some basic skills, the ideas of what children are supposed to learn in school vary widely across cultures (Harkness et al., 2007). This implies that there are different ethnotheories regarding quality education among different cultures. Ethnotheories are cultural models (Harkness et al., 2009), they are 'the pathways through which development is fostered' (Eberly, Joshi, Konzal, & Galen, 2010, p. 25). To be more precise, they are the views of a specific culture about how children should be raised and educated (Eberly, Joshi, Konzal, & Galen, 2010). These ethnotheories are important for the way quality education is formed. To illustrate, cultural values are expressed in the goals and ways in which societal institutions function, such as education systems (Schwartz, 1999).

Due to the variation of ethnotheories regarding quality education, it may be difficult to implement interventions and conduct cross cultural research on this topic. Kauffman, Conroy, Gardner and Oswald (2008) mention that the effectiveness of research instruments can only be considered convincing when the research instruments are culturally sensitive. This is the case when the cultural context in which an intervention is evaluated and delivered is taken into account. The research intervention can then be indicated as culturally sensitive (Bernal, Bonilla, & Bellido, 1995). Moreover, cultural sensitivity leads to effective communication, for example between experts and local people. Therefore, it is significant for cross cultural research instruments and interventions to be culturally sensitive (Foronda, 2008).

### **Emic and etic approaches**

There are two types of approaches that can be used when performing cross cultural research, named the emic- and the etic approach. Etic dimensions are those that emerge in

every culture, thus universal dimensions. Etic dimensions are those that only emerge in one culture (Cheung & Leung, 1998). Moreover, the etic approach represents the perspective of researchers, the ‘outsiders’ of a cultural group. The emic approach represents the perspective of the people of a culture, the ‘insiders’ of a cultural group (Nettl, 1983). Within qualitative research, a tension exists of which approach can be considered the most favorable for cross cultural research (Olive, 2014). To illustrate, on the one hand, the etic approach can be useful as a grid for references and comparison between cultures (Saville-Troike, 2003). However, working from an etic approach can also cause difficulties. For example, when working in other contexts, experts mostly have different perceptions of the local people (Nsamenang, 2008). Besides, people who are outsiders of a cultural group tend to rely on typical cultural stereotypes and make overgeneralizations (Solano-Flores & Nelson-Barber, 2001).

On the other hand, the emic perspective could be considered as more relevant in the interpretation and understanding of a culture because it makes it possible to truly comprehend the aspects of a culture (Olive, 2014). However, it is impossible to achieve a solely emic perspective because every researcher brings subjectivity to a study due to their personal experiences, perspectives and ideas (Olive, 2014). Thus, both approaches have their (dis)advantages for cross-cultural research and interventions.

### **Introduction Edukans and EDU Q-card**

Edukans is a Dutch organization with a mission to provide quality education for children and youth in developing countries (Edukans, n.d.). Edukans created the EDUstars Model, a quality model that aims to assist schools in developing a high-standard learning environment for their students (Edukans, 2019a). This model uses an assessment tool, named the EDU Q-card, to assess the quality of primary and secondary schools and to monitor its quality developments. The main goal of the EDU Q-card is to start a dialogue with school staff and external experts and therewith reinforce efforts to make improvements for quality education (Edukans, 2019b). Moreover, the EDU Q-card focuses on five dimensions considering quality education: learning environment, learning, teaching, school leadership and parents and community. These dimensions are based on the pillars of the EDUstars Model, which are: an appropriate learning environment, efficient learning processes, well-trained and motivated teachers, competent school management and leaders and active parental and community involvement. Since these pillars are used as universal aspects of quality education, it can be assumed that Edukans considers these pillars etic dimensions.

Ünal (n.d.) examined the content- and face validity of the EDU Q-card by organizing a focus group. She evaluated the items of the EDU Q-card and made suggestions to make the

items understandable for every stakeholder. However, in addition to the content- and face validity, the cultural sensitivity of an assessment tool is also an important requirement for its effectiveness (Kauffman, Conroy, Gardner, & Oswald, 2008). To illustrate, Courtney (2008) mentions that it is a pre-requisite to define and contextualize the meaning of quality education in order to gain insight on the effect of an assessment tool in developing countries. Therefore, this study aims to build upon Ünal's research by focusing on the construct validity of the EDU Q-card in an Ethiopian context and related, therewith examining its cultural sensitivity through investigating if those pillars can indeed be considered as etic dimensions.

The general aim of this study is to address the construct validity of the EDU Q card by examining Ethiopian stakeholders' ethnotheories regarding quality education, and analyzing to what extent these ethnotheories match the main pillars of the EDU Q-card.

Stakeholders can be understood as Ethiopian people involved in education, such as school directors, teachers and educational specialists. Moreover, construct validity refers to the extent to which an assessment tool actually elicits the construct that it is supposed to measure. (Admiraal, Hoeksma, van de Kamp, & van Duin, 2011). In regard to the EDU Q-card, for a strong construct validity, it is important that the pillars of the EDU Q-card match the ethnotheories of the Ethiopian stakeholders regarding quality education. That is to say, there will be a match when all Ethiopian stakeholders view the same aspects as important for quality education as the five pillars of the EDU Q-card. In this case, the EDU Q-card will measure what it is supposed to measure (quality education).

Moreover, if the five pillars match the ethnotheories of the Ethiopian stakeholders regarding quality education and the construct validity of the EDU Q-card could be considered strong, this could indicate that the five pillars can be considered etic dimensions for quality education. Based on this information, indications of the cultural sensitivity of the EDU Q-card can be given. To explain, if the five pillars are indeed etic dimensions, this could imply that the EDU Q-card is applicable in different cultural contexts and therefore culturally sensitive. The following research question will be the guideline for this research: *What are the Ethiopian stakeholders' ethnotheories regarding quality education and to what extent do they match the main pillars of the EDU Q-card?*

### **Theoretical framework**

As mentioned before, the five EDU Q-card pillars are based on the five pillars of the EDUstars Model (an appropriate learning environment, efficient learning processes, well-trained and motivated teachers, competent school management and leaders and active parental and community involvement). In the following section, the importance and scientific

foundation of these five pillars will be further substantiated and related to an Ethiopian context.

**The learning environment.** The learning environment of the school is the first pillar of the EDU Q-card. This is considered important for quality education since a healthy school environment can be directly related to the improvement of a child's health, as well as its effective learning. An unhealthy school environment can have negative influences, such as poor school attendance and learning ability (Wargo, 2004). Moreover, the social and emotional climate is also an important aspect of a learning environment (Edukans, 2019b). School climate can be understood as the character of a school life and its quality. It is based on people's experiences and reflects: 'norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures' (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009, p. 182).

Also in Ethiopia, the Federal Ministry of Education (FMOEE) (2015) mentions the importance of an accessible, healthy and safe school environment. A subset of this is an enforcement of the reduction of gender-based violence and harassment. Moreover, potable drinking water, gender-specific sanitation facilities and facilities for children in need of special education are important aspects of the learning environment according to the FMOEE (2015). Since the FMOEE also acknowledges the importance of learning environments, it could be assumed that the Ethiopian stakeholder's ethnotheories regarding the learning environment matches the learning environment pillar of the EDU Q-card. This implies that the learning environment could be an etic dimension for quality education. However, other aspects such as potable drinking water are probably specifically important in the context of Ethiopia and could thus be emic dimensions. This could imply that the learning environment in general is viewed as important by Ethiopian stakeholders, but within learning environments there might be emic dimensions which are not necessarily important for other cultural contexts.

**Learning.** The learning processes are the second pillar of the EDU Q-card. Active Learning pedagogy is the guiding model for this pillar. The foundation of this theory lies in the social constructivist theory of learning which is founded by Dewey, Vigotsky and Piaget (Edukans, 2019b). The following perspectives on learning are important in this theory. First of all, students have an active role in acquiring knowledge. Secondly, learning is a creative process since students create or recreate knowledge themselves. Thirdly, students construct knowledge and understanding in a social way. Fourthly, this approach may lead to deeper understanding and active use of knowledge. Lastly, learning is connected to the students' real



life (Perkins, 1999).

In Ethiopia, since at least the curriculum in 2006, there has been an emphasis on Active Learning. As a result, teachers have been requested to use Active Learning methods in their teaching style. However, policy documents and education strategy documents did not explicitly elaborate or gave indications on how to translate Active Learning into the teaching-learning process. Therefore, the concept of Active learning was commonly understood in the wrong way and was not mastered at all (Serbessa, 2006). Furthermore, in some Ethiopian nations, politeness and obedience are the main goals in the upbringing of children. Therefore, it is more common to inhibit rather than stimulate children to interact or discuss. For this reason, the Ethiopian traditional manner of child upbringing is not a suitable climate to implement Active Learning methods (Serbessa, 2006). Regarding these arguments, it is assumed that Active learning does not fit in the ethnotheories of Ethiopian stakeholders and could not be considered an etic dimension. Therefore, a mismatch with the learning pillar of the EDU Q-card is expected.

**Teaching.** The third pillar of the EDU Q-card is teaching. This is important because teachers are key actors in the learning process (Edukans, 2019b). Teachers perform their role differently in Active Learning than in traditional classroom practices. Instead of operating as lecturers, teachers are supposed to prepare relevant and meaningful learning experiences in line with the Active Learning approach for their students (Edukans, 2019b). Another important aspect of teachers is their motivation. A body of literature emphasizes teacher motivation to be a critical aspect for student learning outcomes (Guajardo, 2011).

The FMOEE (2015), also acknowledges that motivated teachers are necessary for a child in school. However, in a research of VSO (n.d.) teachers expressed that they perceive their value and status as very low and that the way society, the community and the government treat them adds to this feeling. Consequently, a large number of teachers did not feel motivated. Ansell (2005) stated that the nature of society's education is based on both internationally as well as culturally motivated ideas about education. This enhances the idea that the FMOEE could promote motivated teachers only because it is internationally regarded as an important aspect for quality education. Meanwhile, since teachers feel undervalued by the government and society, teaching, and their motivation, may not be seen as important to Ethiopian culture itself and thus not be part of Ethiopian stakeholders ethnotheories regarding quality education. This would imply that teaching and teacher motivation may not be considered as etic dimensions for quality education and therefore, a mismatch with the teaching pillar of the EDU Q-card can be assumed.

**School leadership.** The school leadership pillar of the EDU Q-card relates to leaders and school management (Edukans, 2019b). Appropriate leadership and school policies are important since they determine school practices, such as the student's learning processes, their health, well-being and the teacher's support. Moreover, the responsibility of the school management team is to provide the best possible outcomes in the other pillars (Edukans, 2019b).

The FMOEE (2015) also acknowledges that quality school management has an important impact on the learning performance of students. Moreover, teachers participating in a VSO research (n.d.) also acknowledge the effect that good leadership can have at school level. Since these Ethiopian stakeholders also acknowledge the importance of school leadership, it could be assumed that the school leadership pillar matches the Ethiopian stakeholder's ethnotheories regarding quality education. As a consequence, the assumption arises that leadership could be an etic dimension for quality education.

**Parents & Community.** The last pillar of the EDU Q-card involves the parental and community involvement. These are important factors, since the process of education does not only occur in a school setting, it is a broader concept that involves the child's home and community as well (Hahn & Truman, 2015). Moreover, research has shown that an increase in parental and community involvement in schools can result in improvement of student achievement (Gordon & Louis, 2009).

In Ethiopia, the School Improvement Plan approach is used to improve school standards. Part of this program is to engage the community in the school planning and school management. To be more precise, there is an association of parents, students and teachers (PSTA) connected to each school, which is involved in the decision-making and management process of the school (FMOEE, 2015). This shows the perhaps high importance of parental and community involvement in Ethiopian education systems too. Therefore, it may be expected that the parents and community pillar will also match with the ethnotheories regarding quality education of Ethiopian stakeholders. This again could imply that parental and community involvement could be considered etic dimensions for quality education.

## **Method**

### **Type of research**

This study is an exploratory qualitative research. In this type of research are situations, events, interactions and people interpreted and described in detail according to their nature and characteristics (Baar, 2002). An inductive style is used with a focus on individual sense-making. Moreover, the researcher aims to understand a phenomenon from the view of the

participant (Creswell, 2014). This study is focused on understanding the ethnotheories of the Ethiopian stakeholders regarding quality education, which makes the qualitative approach a suitable choice for this study.

### **Participants**

Participants of the current study were sixteen Ethiopian stakeholders of education. These participants have been selected through convenient sampling, in which participants who meet the required criteria are selected through convenient cases (Robinson, 2013). In this case, the participants were selected through contacts of the supervisor in Addis Ababa. The criteria for the participants was to be a teacher, school director or an educational specialist working with the EDU Q-card.

In order to assure the representativeness of this study, research was conducted in the capital (Addis Ababa) and a city in a more rural area of Ethiopia (Jima). Moreover, both schools that are familiar (STAR-schools) and schools that are unfamiliar (non-STAR schools) with the EDU Q-card were approached. The reason for this was to obtain the most reliable and unbiased answers. Six school directors, four teachers, one tutor, two District Education Officers and three staff members of the Development Expertise Center took part in this study. Of the participants, fifteen were men and one participant was a woman. Eleven participants from Addis Ababa and five participants from Jima participated. Eleven participants were familiar with the EDU Q-card and five were unfamiliar with the EDU Q card.

### **Measuring instrument**

The data was collected through a semi-structured interview method. According to this interview method, predetermined questions are prepared, but due to the conversational manner, there is still space for participants to explore issues that are important according to them (Longhurst, 2016). Beforehand, the aim of this research was made operational by eight related topics in a topic list. Corresponding to those topics were some interview questions established to use as a guideline. Apart from these could the interviewer also ask additional questions if elaboration or clarification was needed. The questions had an open nature in order for the interviewer to stay as objective as possible.

The interview consisted of the following topics: (1) Importance of quality education (e.g., respondent's view towards the importance of quality education and the improvement of quality education in Ethiopia) Example question: *To what extent do you think improvement of the quality of education is beneficial for a child in Ethiopia and why?* (2) Relevance of EDU Q-card in Ethiopian context (e.g., respondent's view towards the EDU Q-card, relevance of items for Ethiopian context and missing items in the EDU Q-card for Ethiopian context)

Example question: *What do you think of the EDU Q-card as an assessment tool for the quality of education?* (3) Definition of quality education (e.g., necessary aspects of quality education in general and important aspects of quality education for Ethiopian culture) Example question: *What aspects are necessary to have quality education according to you?* (4) The learning environment (e.g., respondent's understanding of the learning environment and respondent's view towards the importance of the learning environment). Example question: *What would make a learning environment appropriate for a student?* (5) Learning (e.g., respondent's view on types of efficient learning processes and the role of the child and teacher in these learning processes). Example question: *What type of learning processes would be efficient for a student?* (6) Teaching (e.g., respondent's view and understanding of the importance of teacher motivation and the necessary skills for a quality teacher). Example question: *What skills does a teacher need in order to be a quality teacher?* (7) School leadership (e.g., respondent's view on the importance of school management and the role of school management) Example question: *What should be the role of the school management in the school?* (8) Parents and community (e.g., respondent's view on the importance of parental and community involvement and the kind of activities that parents/community can participate in to be involved) Example question: *What kind of activities show active parental involvement according to you?*

## **Procedure**

Firstly, information about the EDU Q-Card and quality education in general has been obtained in the Netherlands. This was done through literature research and conversations with specialists of the EDU Q-Card in the Netherlands. Later on, data was collected through interviews in Addis Ababa and Jima over the course of seven weeks. The interviews were conducted in collaboration with my internship partner and the average length of an interview was seventy minutes. In most of the interviews, a translator was present to either translate all the answers, or only help out when necessary. For the reliability and validity several measurements were taken. Firstly, anonymity was ensured for the participants to increase the reliability and validity of the data. In order to enable anonymity, respondent's personal information was not mentioned in the result section of this study. Moreover, the participants were informed of the purpose of the research and their consent was asked for the recording of the interviews. Since all respondents agreed to the recording, all interviews were recorded and notes were made as well. Due to these recordings and notes, it was possible to transcribe the interviews very precisely which also contributed to the reliability and validity of the data. Moreover, Longhurst (2016) states that if interviews are transcribed soon after conducting

them, this is advantageous. Therefore, the interviews were divided between the two interviewers and transcribed as soon as possible after the interview took place.

After the data collection in Ethiopia, the data was analyzed in the Netherlands. Based on the findings of the analysis, a match between the Ethiopian stakeholders' ethnotheories regarding quality education and the EDU Q-card was evaluated. With this evaluation, the construct validity of the EDU Q-card was assessed and an indication of the cultural sensitivity of the EDU Q-card was given.

### **Data analysis**

The transcriptions of the interviews were analyzed using the qualitative analysis method of Baarda (2010). Through inductive coding techniques, that is to say the constant comparison of text fragments of the interviews via open labeling and encoding, concepts related to the aim of this study were established. The conceptualization of the labels, which are key words that indicate the core of a text fragment, were kept as literal as possible to the original response of the participants to make the data as valid as possible. Moreover, these labels were coded in order for other analyzers to be able to control the content of the label according to the original text fragment if necessary. The established concepts were used to describe the ethnotheories of the Ethiopian stakeholders regarding quality education.

### **Results**

In the following section, the main findings are discussed per concept using the categories that were drafted during the data analysis. Quotations from the interviews are used to illustrate the categories. Both the categories and quotations are written in *italic style*. Difference in answers between stakeholders are only mentioned when there was a significant difference.

### **Importance of quality education in Ethiopia**

All the respondents clearly stated that *quality education is important* in general, especially in Ethiopia. An education specialist explained its importance as follows:

*No question about its importance. Because it is very important. It is the backbone for country development. [...] So, we can measure in every, in every gain measures.. in every aspects, it can be social, it can be economically it can be culturally even. So quality education is very important for a country.*

Quality education was stressed to be important for country development, such as its economic- or political development.

*Especially, everything when we get quality education the young will be skillful. The*

*skillful person means working from himself, also for the country. A skilled man power is needed for the development of a country. Skilled man power.*

As this educational specialist explains, skilled people are needed for the development of a country. In order to achieve that, quality education is important for students to become skillful. Moreover, it was mentioned that a lack of quality education has negative consequences, such as criminality. An education specialist mentioned the following: “*All this child has not attend here, they will be gangster, they will be tomorrow, they will be eh.. a thief.*” In brief, all stakeholders agreed on the importance of quality education and that *Ethiopia needs improvement regarding its current level of quality education* for the sake of the development of the country.

The government and several other stakeholders were considered to be important to bring quality education. *The government is financially and through its policy involved in the improvement of quality education.* To illustrate, the government’s policy is focusing on quality education and therefore, the government is an important stakeholder in the improvement of quality education.

### **Relevance of EDU Q-card in Ethiopian context**

The respondents that were familiar with the EDU Q-card were asked about their opinion on the EDU Q-card as an assessment tool. It was mentioned that the *EDU Q-card is relevant for the Ethiopian context due to its relevant items.* An education specialist stressed that the five pillars of the EDU Q-card combined would bring sustainable quality education. Moreover, if the five pillars of the EDU Q-card are implemented correctly, a country can improve the quality of its education. However, although the EDU Q-card was said to be relevant, it was also mentioned that *there are some items missing in the EDU Q-card.* First of all, several respondents mentioned that the government and its education policies should be included in the EDU Q-card.

*Okay, the research, the research in Ethiopia in education quality, there are too much research papers. There are findings, findings to improve student’s behavior, to improve learning, to improve parents follow up, to improve uhm, the students’ toilet, water, materials. That should be, government policy. Education policy is, should be included.*

There are research findings from the Ethiopian government about the improvement of quality education. These research findings and the policies of the Ethiopian government are important for the implementation of quality education in Ethiopia. Therefore, they should be implemented in the EDU Q-card according to the respondents. Moreover, according to an

education specialist, the background of a country should also be included in the EDU Q-card. Also the role of ICT, a focus on the English language proficiency of teachers and students and the results of the students were lacking in the EDU Q-card.

Eventually, when the respondents were asked what items of the EDU Q-card were especially important in the context of Ethiopia, there was no significant difference between the pillars.

### **Definition quality education**

Most importantly, *all five pillars of the EDU Q-card are seen as aspects of quality education*. In other words, the learning environment, learning, teaching, school leadership and parents and community are necessary aspects of quality education. When the respondents were primarily asked (without mentioning the five pillars beforehand) what aspects were necessary for quality education, all five pillars were mentioned at least once, with the learning environment and teaching being most common answers. Other aspects such as accessibility, the government and students were also mentioned, but these were rather vague and therefore not considered as a meaningful result for this study. Later on, when asking the respondents per pillar about its importance and their understanding of the pillar, all respondents confirmed that all the pillars were important.

### **The learning environment**

First of all, the *learning environment is an important aspect of quality education* according to all the respondents “*because in unfavorable condition education is not expected.*” A high quality environment is necessary for the teaching learning process to properly be executed. To illustrate, it is necessary for the learning environment to be convenient so that students can learn. The physical conditions of the learning environment, such as materials (e.g., textbooks, blackboard, chalk and writing materials) and facilities (e.g., toilets, sport fields, library, laboratory and ICT) were especially seen as important to all the respondents. However, some of the respondents acknowledged that *the learning environment consists out of physical and non-physical aspects*. They mentioned the social emotional school climate to be important for quality education as well. To give an example, the peacefulness of the school was mentioned to be important for the learning environment too. This can be achieved through good communication according to one of the school directors: “*Most of the time, the student come, discuss it, not corporal punishment is very, is very unnecessary, because the student will be hate that, that of the school, hating, I’m not coming this school.*”

Thus, corporal punishment was seen as unnecessary, meanwhile being friendly was considered important for the atmosphere of the school.

## **Learning**

The learning processes were also seen as a crucial aspect of quality education. Two types of learning processes were mostly said to be the most efficient learning processes, namely the student-centered approach and Active Learning method. Seven out of the sixteen respondents mentioned that *the student-centered approach is efficient* and important for quality education. Five out of the sixteen respondents mentioned that *Active Learning is efficient* and also important for quality education. The other respondents mentioned that *there are other types of learning processes* such as kinesthetic learning process and a discussion method. However, the student centered learning process and the Active Learning method clearly dominated as efficient learning processes. Yet, although these learning processes were said to be efficient, it was also mentioned that nowadays teachers still teach by a talk and chalk method, which is more instructional and thus the opposite of Active Learning.

The descriptions of Active Learning and the student-centered approach were in line with each other. Both the student-centered approach and Active Learning were described to be participatory and interactive in which students should be active and teachers should be facilitating them. To illustrate, students are seen as independent and should collaborate in Active Learning. Teachers should facilitate the students by guiding and helping them with their tasks instead of only being instructional. A school director illustrated the roles of the students and teachers in active learning as follows:

*Oh the role of the teacher, yeah, in active learning the role of the teacher will be facilitator. Facilitator, is facilitating the student how to do these problem, or that of the issue, or that of the teaching today. [...] Facilitating, the teachers can see the student on the row round, then actively the student can participate in that issue.*

## **Teaching**

Teaching, that is to say especially teachers themselves, were seen as necessary aspects of quality education. Firstly, *teacher's behavior and motivation are important aspects of quality education*. It was said that teachers should be friendly and kind to their students. They must be an example for their students and the community. Furthermore, their motivation influences both their own teaching as well as their students since they will be motivated when the teacher is motivated.

A teacher's job in Ethiopia is seen as an undervalued job. However, *teachers need to*



*be skilled for quality education.* Skills such as subject knowledge, knowledge about methodology, knowledge of material use, communication skills, presentation skills and assessment skills were said to be important for a teacher to be of high quality. Additionally, the classroom management was especially stated to be important for a teacher. They mentioned that teachers need to make sure that students are focused on the topics and that students are active. However, they should also create a relaxing and friendly atmosphere in which students feel free to ask questions with confidence.

Moreover, it was also said that *teachers need training* since they must upgrade their educational level. A school director explained that teachers do not automatically accept new teaching methods such as student-centered learning. Therefore, he mentioned teacher training to be important for educational reform. “*But what challenge here is, teacher not accept automatically. Yeah, so the teacher should need training to change or to diverse their attitude what they have known before.*”

### **School leadership**

The school management was also considered to be an aspect of quality education. The *school management is important for quality education because of its leading role and responsibilities* according to the respondents. “*Because it is the leader, is the one who leads the teachers, who knows what should be achieved, who writes, who plans and therefore, if there is no effective management there will not be effective school.*”

Several roles and responsibilities were listed for a school management to be of high quality. Most of these roles and responsibilities have a leading character, such as coaching, giving tasks, planning, coordinating, directing and evaluating. There are also several policies that were said to be important for quality education, such as; policies against student drop out, policies for students with special needs and policies about school dressing.

### **Parents and community**

Both parental and community involvement were considered aspects of quality education. For parental involvement respondents mentioned that *parents should be involvement in their child's education and in school.* The respondents mostly mentioned that parents should follow their child's education and support their child at home. Moreover, they should be communicating with the teacher about their child's performance. A teacher explained the importance and understanding of parental involvement in their child's education as follows:

*The child will be somewhat not responsible, because as a kid you need some direction guidance from your parents. So, if the parents is involved, what you have learned today, what was the lesson, how was it, was it difficult, you need any support, what can I help you if they ask such questions for a student, then the child knows they are engaged and they know something and he will give a lot of attention I think.*

Apart from parental involvement, community involvement was also considered as important for quality education. As mentioned by the respondents: *community involvement and their support is important to bring quality education.* The community can support the school through financial contribution, labor work or contribution of materials. Furthermore, the PTSA (parent-teacher-student-association) was also mentioned many times as example of parental and community involvement. The school management is supposed to organize a discussion with the PTSA to discuss school matters and sometimes ask them for help. Through the discussion about the schools' issues and development, the parents/community are involved in the school as well.

### **Discussion**

The general aim of this study was to address the construct validity of the EDU Q-card by examining Ethiopian stakeholders' ethnotheories regarding quality education and analyzing to what extent these ethnotheories match the main pillars of the EDU Q-card.

#### **The learning environment**

For the learning environment pillar, it was expected that the learning environment would be valued important by Ethiopian stakeholders and therefore be an etic dimension. However, within the learning environment there could be emic dimensions important specifically for Ethiopian culture. In line with this assumption, the learning environment is clearly important to the Ethiopian stakeholders, which could indicate that the learning environment is an etic dimension for quality education. Physical conditions were especially important to the Ethiopian stakeholders, though the peacefulness and atmosphere were also deemed important. This is in line with the description of the social emotional school climate of Cohen, McCabe, Michelli and Pickeral (2009). No well-defined aspects that would only be important for the Ethiopian learning environment were mentioned, therefore it cannot be concluded that there are emic dimensions within the learning environment concept for the Ethiopian culture.

#### **Learning**

For the learning pillar it was assumed that Active Learning with its learning perspectives as described by Perkins (1999) may not fit into the polite and obedient manner of

child upbringing of the Ethiopian culture (Serbessa, 2006). However, it seems like most of the Ethiopian stakeholders in this study do not agree and actually aim to implement Active Learning. Moreover, Serbessa (2006) noted that Active Learning was commonly understood incorrectly and therefore not mastered at all. On the contrary, the explanations of the respondents regarding the role of teachers and students in Active Learning were in line with the description of Active Learning of Perkins (1999), which indicates that Active Learning is not understood incorrectly by all Ethiopian stakeholders. However, although the respondents expressed the importance of Active Learning, they also mentioned that Active Learning is not performed actively in the Ethiopian classrooms. Research led by Latchanna and Dagnaw (2009) found that teachers have a positive attitude towards Active Learning methods. However, several factors such as a shortcoming on budget to provide instructional materials and a lack of training and experience hindered them from using Active Learning methods. These factors could still play a role in the absence of the utilization of Active Learning in the Ethiopian classrooms. However, since these factors are not necessarily cultural hinders, there are reasons to assume that Active Learning is an etic dimension for quality education.

### **Teaching**

Although motivated teachers were stressed to be important by the FMOEE (2015), the VSO (n.d.) found that teachers did not feel valued by the way the government treats them. Based on this information, the assumption arose that teaching and teacher motivation may not be etic dimensions, but only an internationally promoted view. However, teachers and their motivation were certainly said to be important by the stakeholders. Yet, it was indeed stressed that a teacher's job is seen as an undervalued job in Ethiopia. However, the FMOEE (2015) in their last education sector development program, acknowledged the low status of a teaching job and therefore created a strategy to 'transform teaching in a profession of choice' (FMOEE, 2015, p. 56). This strategy aims to re-establish the prestige of a teaching job so that teachers will be valued by others (FMOEE, 2015). Since the importance of teachers and their motivation was obviously stated by the stakeholders and also the FMOEE is working to improve the value of a teacher's job, it could be assumed that teaching and teacher motivation are considered important and could therefore be etic aspects of quality education.

### **School leadership**

Both the FMOEE (2015) as well as the teachers that were part of the VSO research (n.d.) acknowledged the importance of school management. Therefore, it was assumed that school leadership could be an etic dimension. In line with this expectation is school management being considered as highly important by the Ethiopian stakeholders in this study.

This could indicate that school leadership is an etic dimension for quality education. However, in Ethiopian culture, there is a hierarchical workplace system in which criticism of leadership is not encouraged (VSO, n.d.). This could be an explanation for socially desirable answers of the respondents, which makes the assumption of school leadership as an etic dimension doubtful.

### **Parents and community**

Since the PSTA (parent-student-teacher association) in Ethiopia is involved in the decision-making and management process of schools (FMOEE, 2015), it was assumed that Ethiopian stakeholders would give great importance to parental and community involvement. Based on this assumption, it was expected that parental and community involvement could be etic dimensions for quality education. In line with this assumption, both parental and community involvement were considered as important for education quality by the Ethiopian stakeholders in this study, which indicates that they could be etic dimensions for quality education. However, in Ethiopia parent's decision-making authority is limited to issues specified by the school management. The school management is in charge of organizing the meetings which includes deciding who will be invited, who is allowed to speak and to what end. Due to this, they are able to give direction to the course and outcomes of the meetings (Mitchell, 2017). Given that, there might be a possibility that parents and community members, who did not participate in this study, may have different opinions towards the importance of parental and community involvement due to their limited role.

### **Conclusion**

The guiding question in this study was: *what are the Ethiopian stakeholders' ethnotheories regarding quality education and to what extent do they match the main pillars of the EDU Q-card?* The main findings of this study indicate that the learning environment, teaching, learning, school leadership and parents and community are viewed as important by Ethiopian stakeholders and could therefore be regarded as the ethnotheories of Ethiopian stakeholders regarding quality education. This would imply that there is a match between Ethiopian stakeholders' ethnotheories regarding quality education and the five pillars of the EDU Q-card, which could indicate that the five pillars can be considered etic dimensions. Also, this could indicate that the EDU Q-card thus actually elicits what it is supposed to measure, which implies that the EDU Q-card's construct validity could be strong.

Since the construct validity of the EDU Q-card could be indicated as strong, and the five pillars could be considered etic dimensions for quality education, this would suggest that the EDU Q-card is applicable in different cultural contexts. Therefore, there are reasons to

believe that the EDU Q-card could be indicated as culturally sensitive as well.

### **Limitations**

A possible limitation of this study was the language barrier. Since none of us spoke Amharic, we did not always have the possibility to directly communicate with the respondents. Most of the respondents spoke limited English, which made it difficult for the respondents to express themselves. As a result, it was sometimes difficult to understand them. However, at most of the interviews, there was a translator present as well. He was able to clarify any misunderstandings. Yet, sometimes, the respondents would give a very extensive answer in Amharic for a few minutes, which was translated by the translator in a short answer. In these cases, the translator probably gave a summary of the respondent's answer, instead of translating everything that was said. At these times, the main point was communicated, but some details may have gotten lost. In future research, it is therefore recommended that the translator translate directly after each sentence uttered, instead of waiting for the respondent to have finished their answer.

Moreover, in this study, in depth questions are asked in addition to the already established questions. Due to this, further explanation was provided when necessary which resulted into understandable answers. However, every cultural group has a different set of understandings. As a result, although the same language is used in interviews, it cannot be assumed that the understanding of the researcher is precisely what the respondent means. Participation observation provides a way to create a better understanding through studying the use of language in context (Becker & Geer, 1957). Therefore, it is recommended for future research to make use of participant observation alongside interviews.

In addition, several respondents mentioned that certain aspects that are considered important for quality education are in fact not being practiced. Due to this, there are reasons to believe that socially desirable answers may have played a role in this study. Moreover, Triandis (2001) in his study about individualistic versus collectivistic cultures, found out that, in collectivist cultures, lying is accepted if it may help the in-group or save face. This implies a higher chance on socially desirable answers in research when working with collectivistic cultures. However, before starting an interview, we made it very clear that this study was not of judgmental nature in order for the respondents to feel comfortable to be honest. In order to make sure that socially desirable answers do not play a role, participation observation could also be used to shed light on the real practice. To explain, when making use of participant observations, descriptions can be checked against facts and discrepancies can be pointed out (Becker & Geer, 1957).

Lastly, only education specialists, teachers and school directors participated in this research. Since parents and the community are also considered to be important stakeholders of quality education (Edukans, 2019b), it could be an asset to also use parents and community members as respondents in future research about ethnotheories regarding quality education.

### **Implications**

Nevertheless, this study comes with some implications as well. First of all, although the five pillars would match the ethnotheories of Ethiopian stakeholders regarding quality education, the stakeholders opinioned that the government's education policies should be included in the EDU Q-card as well. In other words, although the five pillars may function as etic dimensions, Ethiopian stakeholders still prefer an emic approach. An approach is emic when it is built upon internal perspectives of a cultural group (Nettl, 1983). Thus, in this case, in order to use an emic approach, the EDU Q-card should be adjusted to the perspectives of the Ethiopian government on quality education. However, nowadays, the divergence of emic and etic perspectives is not necessarily a limitation, it can be perceived as an opportunity as well (Olive, 2014). Therefore, it is recommended that Edukans strengthens the cultural sensitivity of the EDU Q-card by combining an etic and emic approach. This could be done by adjusting the five pillars (etic dimensions) to government education policies (emic dimensions).

Furthermore, this study is only focused on the Ethiopian context. 'Ethiopia is one of the least urbanized countries in the world' (FMOEE, 2015, p. 11) which implies that its situation regarding quality education is probably different from other cultural contexts. Abubakar (2015) stressed that the transfer of a test from one context to another could lead to problems that threaten the validity of the data. Although for Ethiopia the EDU Q-card seems to be applicable, it is not secured that it will be applicable in other cultural contexts as well. In order to give a better insight of the cultural sensitivity of the EDU Q-card, it is necessary for Edukans to carry out more research in different cultural contexts.

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