



Legacy and Impact of Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School in Awi Zone, Ethiopia: A Descriptive Historical Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the historical development and contributions of *Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School*, one of the oldest educational institutions in Awi Zone, Amhara Region, Ethiopia. Established in 1975 Ethiopian Calendar (1983 Gregorian Calendar), the school has significantly expanded access to secondary education in a rural setting. Over the past four decades, it has produced thousands of graduates who now serve as teachers, doctors, engineers, and community leaders, thereby contributing to human capital formation development and regional progress. The study documents the school's history, academic programs, and societal impact while also identifying key challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, shortages of qualified teachers, and limited access to modern teaching technologies. At the same time, it highlights opportunities for institutional growth through alumni engagement, partnerships, and digital transformation. By situating Ankesha's experience within the broader context of Ethiopian rural education, the paper underscores the school's enduring significance and its potential to inform strategies for educational advancement in similar contexts.

Keywords: *Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School, Awi Zone, rural education, human capital formation, secondary education in Ethiopia*

1. Introduction

The expansion of modern education in Ethiopia gained momentum during the second half of the 20th century, with regional towns gradually gaining access to secondary schooling. Before this period, educational opportunities beyond the primary level were largely concentrated in major urban centers such as Addis Ababa, Dessie, Bahir Dar, and Gondar, leaving rural regions with limited pathways to higher education (Tekeste, 1996, 2006). As the Ethiopian government began to prioritize mass education as part of its nation-building and modernization agenda, new secondary schools were established across different regions. Within this context, *Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School* emerged as a pioneering institution in the Awi Zone of the Amhara Region. Since its establishment in 1975 Ethiopian Calendar (1983 Gregorian Calendar), the school has been at the forefront of expanding educational access for rural communities that had previously been marginalized in the national education system.

Despite its remarkable history and influence, little has been formally documented about the development and contributions of Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School. The absence of systematic records risks overshadowing the institution's historical significance and its vital role in shaping generations of students and professionals. For nearly four decades, the school has produced graduates who went on to become teachers, doctors, engineers, administrators, and community leaders. These alumni have not only transformed their own livelihoods but also contributed significantly to the social and economic development of the wider Awi Zone and beyond. However, without proper documentation, the collective memory of the school's journey and its broader contributions risks fading into obscurity (Semela, 2011).

Several Ethiopian scholars have stressed the importance of documenting the history of schools as a way of preserving institutional memory, strengthening educational identity, and guiding future reforms (Bareke, 2021; DeJaeghere, Williams, & Choi, 2020). Institutional histories are not merely nostalgic accounts; they provide valuable insights into how schools evolve in response to social, political, and economic changes. They also highlight the resilience of schools in rural areas that often face resource shortages, policy inconsistencies, and infrastructural limitations. In this sense, recording the experiences of institutions like Ankesha serves both as an academic exercise and as a practical resource for policymakers and educational planners.

Research on rural schooling in Ethiopia has consistently underscored the transformative role that secondary schools play in shaping youth trajectories. For many students in rural communities, schools like Ankesha are the only viable gateway to higher education and professional careers (Schewel, 2018; Mussa, 2019). In regions where agriculture dominates livelihoods and access to modern facilities remains limited, secondary education provides a bridge to mobility, empowerment, and broader participation in national development. By examining the history of Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School, therefore, this paper situates the institution within the larger narrative of rural education in Ethiopia, emphasizing both its achievements and its persistent challenges.

In doing so, the study seeks to address three key objectives: first, to document the historical development of Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School; second, to analyze its contributions to human capital formation and community development; and third, to identify the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for the institution. Through this exploration, the paper contributes to the growing body of literature on the role of secondary schools in rural Ethiopia, while also offering insights for educators, policymakers, and community stakeholders committed to advancing equitable education in the country.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in **Human Capital Theory** (Becker, 1993), which emphasizes the role of education in developing skills, knowledge, and capacities that contribute to both individual and societal advancement. Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School serves as a critical site for human capital formation, producing graduates who pursue higher education and contribute as professionals, educators, and community leaders. In addition, **Social Capital Theory** (Putnam, 2000) underpins the analysis of alumni networks, community engagement, and partnerships that strengthen institutional development. This theoretical lens allows the study to consider how social relationships and collective participation enhance educational outcomes and foster regional development.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationships among the key factors influencing the school's legacy and impact. **Inputs** include infrastructure, qualified teachers, curriculum, teaching resources, and community support, which feed into **processes** such as teaching and learning activities, extracurricular programs, alumni engagement, and digital initiatives. These processes lead to **outputs and outcomes**, including human capital formation, gender equity in education, academic achievement, and community development. **External factors**, such as national educational policies (ESDP V), rural context challenges, and access to ICT, interact with and influence all stages of the framework, shaping the school's overall impact and long-term sustainability.

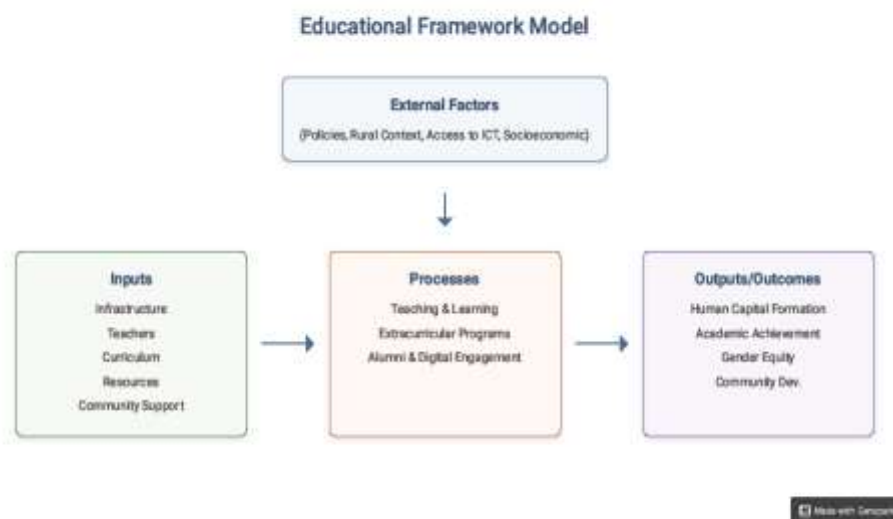


Figure 1: Conceptual Model Idea

3. Historical Background of Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School

Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School was founded in 1975 Ethiopian Calendar (1983 Gregorian Calendar) in Ankesha district, Awi Zone of the Amhara Region. Its establishment marked a turning point in the history of education in the area, as it was among the very first institutions to offer secondary education to rural students who had previously been excluded from such opportunities. Prior to its foundation, students who wished to continue beyond primary school were forced to migrate to distant towns such as Bahir Dar, Debre Markos, or Addis Ababa. For many families, this was not financially or socially feasible, leaving the majority of rural youth with no access to education beyond the primary level. Thus, the creation of Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School represented a milestone in bridging the educational gap between urban and rural Ethiopia.

From its inception, however, the school faced a range of challenges. Shortages of qualified teachers meant that many subjects were initially taught by underqualified instructors, while the lack of teaching materials and resources made learning difficult. Infrastructure was also a major concern. The school began with a limited number of classrooms, which were often overcrowded, and basic facilities such as laboratories, libraries, and administrative offices were either absent or poorly developed. These difficulties reflected broader structural problems facing Ethiopia's education sector during the late 20th century, particularly in rural regions where resources were scarce and policy implementation was uneven (Tekeste, 1996; Bishaw, 2014).

Despite these challenges, the school's establishment was consistent with Ethiopia's broader policy of expanding education as a foundation for national development. During the 1980s and 1990s, successive governments recognized the importance of education in building human capital and reducing rural-urban disparities. The Ministry of Education emphasized the need to expand access to secondary schools, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, as part of its national development agenda (MoE, 2019; Lindskog, 2017). In this respect, Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School was not only a local achievement but also part of a wider educational reform movement across Ethiopia.

The school's survival and growth were also closely tied to the support of the local community. Families in Ankesha and surrounding districts made significant sacrifices to ensure their children could attend, often contributing through labor, financial donations, or local materials to support the school's construction and maintenance. The sense of ownership and responsibility demonstrated by the community helped the institution overcome its early struggles. Parents also encouraged student enrollment at a time when rural education was often undervalued, particularly for girls, who faced social and cultural barriers to continued schooling (Bishop, 2008; Bareke, 2021).

Over time, Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School expanded both in size and reputation. It gradually developed into a hub for educational activities in the Awi Zone, attracting students from neighboring districts and serving as a feeder institution for higher education across Ethiopia. The school's alumni went on to join universities, professional fields, and public service, thereby reinforcing its status as a cornerstone of local and regional development. Today, it stands as a testament to the resilience of rural educational institutions in Ethiopia and the vital role they play in broadening opportunities for marginalized communities.

4. Academic Programs and Curriculum

Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School currently provides education for Grades 9 through 12, which corresponds to the preparatory stage of Ethiopia's secondary education system. At this level, students are typically between the ages of 15 and 19, and they prepare for the Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Certificate Examination (EHEECE), which determines eligibility for admission into universities and colleges. The school adheres strictly to the national curriculum developed by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (MoE, 2019), ensuring that its students are equipped with the competencies expected at the national level.

Upon entry into Grade 11, students are streamed into one of two broad academic categories: the **Natural Science stream** or the **Social Science stream**. This streaming process is largely determined by prior academic performance, student interest, and in some cases, teacher recommendations. The **Natural Science stream** emphasizes subjects such as Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Mathematics, alongside English, Amharic, Civic and Ethical Education, and Physical Education. The **Social Science stream**, on the other hand, places greater weight on subjects like History, Geography, Economics, and Business, in addition to core courses in English, Amharic, and Mathematics (AREB, 2022). Both streams are designed to prepare students either for higher education or, in some cases, for technical and vocational training after completion of Grade 12.

One of the distinctive features of the curriculum at Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School is the **medium of instruction**. English serves as the primary medium for teaching most academic subjects, particularly in the sciences and social sciences. This policy reflects Ethiopia's long-standing orientation toward English as a language of higher education, globalization, and academic mobility (Semela, 2011). At the same time, Amharic, the national language, is taught as a subject and used in language studies, cultural studies, and certain extracurricular activities. The coexistence of English and Amharic reflects Ethiopia's broader linguistic and cultural dynamics, where English plays a role in modern knowledge transfer while Amharic preserves national and regional identity.

The Ethiopian curriculum has been characterized as a product of **global influences combined with local adaptation** (Semela, 2011; Tessema, 2020). On one hand, it borrows heavily from international science and social science frameworks, aligning itself with global academic standards and expectations. On the other, it embeds elements of Ethiopian history, culture, and values, particularly through courses such as Civic and Ethical Education and Ethiopian History. This balance is intended to produce graduates who are competitive in global academic and labor markets while remaining grounded in Ethiopian identity and values.

In addition to formal classroom instruction, Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School provides students with opportunities to engage in **extracurricular activities**, including student clubs, sport associations, and cultural programs. Student clubs, such as English clubs, science clubs, civics clubs, and gender clubs, play a vital role in promoting social interaction, leadership, and civic engagement. Research has shown that participation in such activities enhances students' soft skills, including communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, which are increasingly important in modern academic and professional settings (Tessema, 2020; DeJaeghere, Williams, & Choi, 2020). Moreover, extracurricular activities provide a platform for students to discuss community issues, advocate for social change, and develop leadership potential, thereby extending the school's impact beyond academic achievement.

Overall, the academic programs and curriculum of Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School reflect a commitment to providing quality education that is both nationally relevant and globally competitive. By combining rigorous subject instruction with extracurricular engagement, the school prepares its students not only for examinations and higher education but also for active citizenship and community leadership.

5. Contribution to Human Capital Development

One of the most significant achievements of Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School is its enduring role in the **formation of human capital** in the Awi Zone and beyond. Since its establishment in 1975 E.C. (1983 G.C.), the school has served as a foundation for thousands of students who have graduated and pursued higher education across Ethiopia and, in many cases, abroad. Alumni of the school have gone on to become teachers, doctors, engineers, civil servants, researchers, and community leaders, thereby contributing to both local and national development (AZEEO, 2024; Mulugeta, 2015). The presence of these graduates in critical professions demonstrates how the school has functioned not only as an educational institution but also as a **social mobility ladder** for rural and semi-urban populations who historically had limited access to secondary-level education.

This achievement aligns with the broader **national role of secondary schools** in Ethiopia, which serve as stepping-stones to higher education and professional careers. Secondary education is considered a pivotal stage in human capital development, as it prepares students with the knowledge and skills required for entry into universities and colleges (Bareke, 2021; Gashe, 2020). In particular, the preparatory program at Grades 11 and 12 equips students with discipline-specific foundations, ensuring that they can compete effectively in the Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Certificate Examination (EHEECE). Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School has consistently contributed to this pipeline, enabling students from rural Awi communities to transition successfully into tertiary education.

In addition to producing graduates in various professional fields, the school has played a critical role in **expanding educational opportunities for female students**. Historically, female participation in secondary education in Ethiopia has been hindered by socio-cultural barriers, early marriage, and limited household support (Schewel, 2018). However, with the gradual expansion of awareness, government policy interventions, and community engagement, Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School has witnessed a steady rise in female enrollment over the decades. This trend is especially significant, as research confirms that **increased female participation in secondary education is directly linked to higher levels of community development, reduced poverty, and improved health outcomes** (World Bank, 2021). Moreover, female graduates of the school have increasingly pursued higher education, becoming professionals in education, health, and other sectors, thereby serving as role models for younger generations.

The contribution of Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School to gender equity also resonates with **Ethiopia's educational policy priorities**, which emphasize inclusivity and gender balance in secondary education (AREB, 2022). The school's commitment to supporting female students through counseling services, gender clubs, and teacher mentorship reflects broader national and international initiatives to close the gender gap in education. This effort has not only improved educational access but also strengthened the socio-economic fabric of the Awi Zone by empowering women to participate more actively in the workforce and community decision-making.

Beyond individual academic and career success, the cumulative impact of the school's graduates has been transformative for the **regional economy and governance**. Many alumni serve in leadership positions within government offices, NGOs, schools, and health institutions, contributing to institutional capacity-building and policy implementation. The diffusion of knowledge and skills through these graduates highlights the role of secondary schools as catalysts of long-term development. In this sense, Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School exemplifies the connection between education, human capital development, and socio-economic progress in Ethiopia.

In summary, the school's legacy extends beyond classroom learning: it has nurtured generations of professionals, advanced gender equity, and strengthened community development. Its achievements in human capital formation underscore its continued importance as a cornerstone of educational and socio-economic transformation in the Awi Zone.

6. Community and Regional Impact

Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School has long functioned as a **pillar of educational excellence** in the Awi Zone, extending its influence beyond the immediate school environment. For decades, students from surrounding rural districts have depended on Ankesha as their primary access point to secondary education. In regions where educational institutions are scarce, the school has effectively become a **gateway to upward mobility**, offering opportunities that otherwise might have been inaccessible. Its reputation for academic rigor and organizational efficiency has fostered a sense of **collective community pride**, making it not only an academic institution but also a cultural landmark in the Awi Zone (AREB, 2022). The school's consistent

performance and the success of its alumni have also positioned it as a **model institution**, inspiring neighboring schools to adopt similar organizational strategies and teaching practices.

As Bishaw (2014) notes, rural secondary schools in Ethiopia often perform a **dual role**: while their primary mission is to provide formal education, they also act as cultural and social institutions. Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School embodies this duality. It has served as a hub for community activities, public discussions, and cultural events, thereby strengthening its connection to the local population. The school's extracurricular activities—ranging from student clubs and debates to cultural celebrations—have not only enriched students' educational experience but also encouraged **community engagement and cohesion**. Such activities reinforce the idea that schools are integral to both intellectual growth and social development.

Another major dimension of the school's community impact is seen in its **alumni network**. Many graduates of Ankesha have chosen to return to their hometowns after completing higher education, taking up roles as teachers, health professionals, civil servants, and development agents. This cycle of "giving back" has helped sustain local development by transferring knowledge, skills, and resources back into the community (AZEEO, 2024; Mussa, 2019). For example, graduates who become educators contribute directly to the improvement of primary and secondary schools in the zone, while those in health professions help address critical gaps in rural healthcare delivery. In this way, the school functions as a **development engine**, continuously replenishing the community with skilled human resources.

The regional impact of the school is also evident in its contribution to **social mobility and identity formation**. For many families in rural Awi, sending children to Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School represents a milestone achievement, signifying not just academic advancement but also social recognition. This symbolic value enhances the school's stature as a **beacon of aspiration**, motivating younger generations to pursue education despite economic and social challenges. Furthermore, the school's emphasis on both Natural Science and Social Science streams allows it to produce graduates with diverse skill sets, ensuring that the region benefits from a balanced pool of professionals in various sectors.

Finally, the school has played a crucial role in **regional development planning** by producing graduates who occupy decision-making roles in local government and non-governmental organizations. These individuals influence policies and development projects, thereby shaping the trajectory of the Awi Zone. In this sense, the school's impact is not limited to individual success stories but extends to **institutional strengthening and governance improvement**.

In conclusion, Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School's influence on the community and region is multifaceted. It is not only a center of learning but also a cultural hub, a model institution, and a driver of socio-economic transformation. Through its academic excellence, alumni contributions, and symbolic role in community identity, the school has established itself as a cornerstone of progress in the Awi Zone.

7. Challenges Faced by the School

Despite its achievements, *Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School* continues to face multiple challenges that constrain its potential to deliver high-quality education. These challenges are not unique to the school but are also reflective of broader structural issues within Ethiopia's secondary education system, particularly in rural areas.

Inadequate infrastructure: The school struggles with shortages of essential facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, and libraries, which are critical for effective teaching and learning (MoE, 2019; Lindskog, 2017). Overcrowded classrooms make it difficult for teachers to provide individualized support to students, while the absence of adequately equipped laboratories and libraries limits opportunities for practical, inquiry-based, and independent learning. This infrastructural gap not only lowers academic performance but also reduces students' competitiveness in higher education and the job market.

Limited access to modern teaching technologies and ICT tools: In the digital era, technology integration is central to effective pedagogy. However, Ankesha School has minimal access to ICT resources such as computers, projectors, and internet connectivity (Bareke, 2021; World Bank, 2023). This lack of exposure to technology widens the digital divide between rural and urban schools, limiting students' digital literacy, research skills, and readiness for the global knowledge economy. Teachers also struggle to implement modern, learner-centered methodologies without the aid of technological tools.

Shortages of qualified teachers: A persistent challenge is the shortage of well-trained teachers, particularly in advanced science, mathematics, and technology subjects (Mulugeta, 2015; Gashe, 2020). This shortage often leads to reliance on underqualified or temporary teachers, which in turn affects the quality of instruction. Moreover, high turnover rates among experienced teachers—due to poor working conditions, lack of incentives, and remote school locations—further exacerbate the problem. Students preparing for university entrance examinations are therefore at a disadvantage compared to peers in better-resourced schools.

High student-teacher ratios: Over-enrollment at the school has resulted in a high student-teacher ratio, often exceeding national and international standards (Semela, 2011; Tessema, 2020). This overcrowding makes it difficult to maintain interactive, learner-centered teaching. Teachers are compelled to adopt lecture-based approaches instead of participatory methods, reducing classroom engagement and critical thinking opportunities. It also limits teachers' ability to provide timely feedback, manage classroom behavior, and assess learning outcomes effectively.

Taken together, these challenges reflect systemic issues in Ethiopia's education sector, where resource constraints, rural-urban disparities, and policy implementation gaps remain persistent barriers (MoE, 2019; Bishaw, 2014). The situation at Ankesha School illustrates the urgent need for policy interventions that prioritize investment in infrastructure, teacher training, and technological integration. Without addressing these challenges, the goal of achieving equitable and quality secondary education in rural Ethiopia will remain elusive.

8. Opportunities and Future Directions

Looking ahead, *Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School* holds significant opportunities to strengthen its contribution to educational quality and regional development. These opportunities, if strategically harnessed, could transform existing challenges into pathways for sustainable growth and community empowerment.

Alumni Engagement and Resource Mobilization: Alumni associations represent a powerful but underutilized resource. Former students can mobilize financial, material, and intellectual resources to improve the school's infrastructure, provide scholarships, and establish mentorship programs for current students. This aligns with findings that alumni-led initiatives often enhance both the quality and equity of education by reinforcing community-school partnerships (AZE, 2024; DeJaeghere et al., 2020). Moreover, alumni networks can serve as role models, inspiring students to pursue higher education and professional careers.

Partnerships with Government and NGOs: Stronger collaboration with government institutions, non-governmental organizations, and international development agencies could bring targeted investment in ICT, science laboratories, and teacher training programs. Such partnerships are central to Ethiopia's Education Sector Development Programme V (MoE, 2015), which emphasizes cross-sectoral collaboration for equitable resource distribution. NGOs with expertise in digital learning or teacher professional development could complement government efforts, ensuring that rural schools like *Ankesha* are not left behind.

Documenting Institutional Histories and Heritage: Researchers highlight the value of preserving institutional histories and alumni achievements as a means of strengthening school identity and fostering pride within communities (DeJaeghere et al., 2020; Semela, 2011). For *Ankesha*, documenting its legacy, including student achievements, alumni success stories, and contributions to regional development, could reinforce community ownership and attract further support. A school's heritage functions not only as a record of past achievements but also as a motivational resource for current and future students.

Digitalization and Networking: The digital era presents an opportunity to modernize record-keeping, teaching, and networking systems. Establishing digital platforms for alumni engagement would make it easier to coordinate support activities, share professional opportunities, and mentor current students. At the same time, digitalization of school archives, teaching resources, and communication systems could increase transparency and preserve heritage for future generations (World Bank, 2023; Lindskog, 2017). By adopting even low-cost digital tools, the school could gradually bridge the urban-rural divide in educational opportunities.

Linking Education to Regional Development: Beyond the school itself, *Ankesha* has the opportunity to position itself as a hub for regional development. By aligning with local industries, agricultural enterprises, and higher education institutions, the school could tailor its curriculum toward skill-building that meets both local labor market needs and national development goals. Such an approach resonates with Ethiopia's Education Roadmap, which advocates for stronger connections between education and socio-economic development.

9. Future Directions

To fully realize these opportunities, *Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School* should pursue a set of strategic directions that can transform its challenges into long-term advantages. These directions emphasize sustainability, inclusivity, and alignment with national education priorities.

Institutionalize Alumni Associations: Alumni engagement should move beyond informal support toward an institutionalized structure. Establishing a formal alumni office, supported by a digital platform, would create an organized system to coordinate contributions, mentorship programs, and fundraising campaigns. Alumni can play a critical role not only in financing infrastructure projects but also in guiding current students through mentoring, career counseling, and exposure to professional networks (AZE, 2024; DeJaeghere et al., 2020). Institutionalization ensures continuity, transparency, and accountability in alumni-driven initiatives, turning them into a sustainable resource for the school's development.

Strengthen Partnerships: The school should prioritize building long-term agreements with government agencies, higher education institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Such partnerships could ensure consistent investment in infrastructure, ICT facilities, and teacher training, rather than relying on short-term, ad hoc support. For example, collaborations with nearby universities could facilitate teacher development workshops, while partnerships with NGOs could introduce innovative ICT solutions for resource-constrained settings (World Bank, 2023; MoE, 2015). By embedding these partnerships within the school's long-term strategic plan, *Ankesha* can secure reliable support that directly addresses its most critical needs.

Promote Heritage and Identity: Educational institutions thrive not only on material resources but also on cultural and symbolic capital. Documenting the school's history, achievements, and notable alumni would strengthen institutional identity and community pride. Heritage projects—such as compiling a school chronicle, celebrating anniversaries, or creating digital archives—could reinforce a sense of belonging among students and alumni while inspiring greater community involvement. Highlighting success stories of former students who contribute to regional or national development would also serve as motivation for current learners (DeJaeghere et al., 2020; Semela, 2011). In doing so, *Ankesha* could position itself as a beacon of local educational excellence.

Invest in Digital Transformation: Digitalization presents an opportunity for *Ankesha* to modernize both teaching and administration. The school could begin with affordable, small-scale ICT interventions, such as developing a school website, using mobile applications to improve parent-school communication, and creating an online alumni directory. Over time, these initiatives could expand into digital libraries, online learning platforms, and

virtual alumni networks. Even in contexts of limited connectivity, low-cost, solar-powered solutions and offline learning platforms can be adopted (World Bank, 2023; Lindskog, 2017). Such steps would enhance the efficiency of school operations, broaden access to educational resources, and gradually bridge the digital divide between rural and urban schools.

Align with National Education Policy: To maximize impact and secure external support, all initiatives should be aligned with Ethiopia's **Education Sector Development Programme V (ESDP V)** and the **National Education Roadmap**. This alignment would not only ensure consistency with national priorities such as equity, ICT integration, and teacher professional development, but also increase the likelihood of policy backing and funding (MoE, 2015; MoE, 2019). By situating its development strategies within broader national frameworks, Ankesha can become a model rural school that demonstrates how local initiatives contribute to Ethiopia's long-term educational goals.

10. Conclusion

Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School stands as a pillar of education in the Awi Zone of Ethiopia. Since its founding in 1975 EC, it has contributed significantly to human capital development, community progress, and the expansion of educational opportunities in the Amhara Region. The school represents both the promise and the challenges of education in Ethiopia's rural settings. While resource limitations, inadequate infrastructure, and policy gaps remain pressing issues, its heritage and role in shaping regional development highlight its enduring significance. By institutionalizing alumni networks, fostering sustainable partnerships, embracing digital transformation, and aligning with national education policies, Ankesha can move toward a future that is both resilient and progressive. Ultimately, the school's transformation is not only about improving a single institution but also about demonstrating how local schools can contribute to national development goals and serve as models for rural education advancement in Ethiopia.

11. Recommendations

Based on the challenges and opportunities identified, several practical recommendations are suggested for Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School and similar institutions:

Institutionalize Alumni Associations: The school should formalize alumni networks through an office or digital platform that coordinates resource mobilization, mentorship, and fundraising. Such structures can strengthen school–community linkages and ensure sustained contributions (DeJaeghere et al., 2020).

Strengthen Partnerships: Long-term collaborations with government agencies, universities, and NGOs should be established. These partnerships could focus on improving infrastructure, providing laboratory and ICT facilities, and offering professional development for teachers (World Bank, 2023).

Invest in Digital Transformation: Small-scale ICT initiatives such as developing a school website, mobile-based parent–school communication, and online alumni directories should be prioritized. Gradual digitalization can enhance teaching, learning, and administration (Bareke, 2021).

Improve Teacher Training and Retention: Continuous professional development, coupled with incentives for science and technology teachers, should be pursued to address shortages in qualified staff (Semela, 2011).

Align with National Education Policy: All initiatives should be consistent with Ethiopia's Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP V) and Education Roadmap, thereby increasing the likelihood of receiving policy recognition and funding (MoE, 2019).

12. Implications for Future Research

This study provides a descriptive and historical perspective on Ankesha Senior Secondary and Higher School, but it also opens important directions for future research:

1. **Comparative Studies:** Researchers could examine other rural schools in Ethiopia to identify similarities and differences in challenges, successes, and community engagement. Such comparative studies could inform national-level strategies (Bishaw, 2014).
2. **Impact of Alumni Networks:** Future research could empirically assess how alumni involvement influences school infrastructure, student achievement, and community development.
3. **Digitalization in Rural Schools:** There is a need to investigate how affordable ICT solutions affect teaching practices, student outcomes, and school management, particularly in resource-constrained rural contexts.
4. **Policy Implementation Studies:** Scholars could evaluate how well national education policies such as ESDP V are being implemented at school levels, with a focus on rural disparities.
5. **Longitudinal Research:** Long-term studies could track the progress of Ankesha and similar schools over time, providing insights into the sustainability of reforms and interventions.

Informed Consent

- The authors have obtained informed consent from all participants

Availability of data and materials

- The data reviewed and analyzed in this article is available from the corresponding author on any responsible request.

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