

Ethiopian College of Teacher Education Program: A Tension between Selection, Curriculum and Professional Development

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to identify the major issues and challenges in Ethiopian college of teacher education program with respect to selection of prospective candidates, curriculum development and continuous professional development. Qualitative data gathered from literature was analyzed and interpreted. The data were collected based on the relevance to the context and recent developments of the topic under investigation. Besides, document analysis method was adopted to assess the selection procedures, content of the teacher education curriculum and obtain relevant information. The findings of the review indicated that the major contextual challenges of teacher education program in Ethiopia were admission of low quality candidates, low quality curriculum and lack of relevant continuous professional development program in college of teacher education. Moreover, the teacher education curriculum was not aligned with primary school curriculum, and curriculum was not in TPAKC integrated manner. Finally, based on the analysis of the results, the researchers forwarded possible recommendations and way out that could help to bridge the gap.

Keywords: Teacher Education, Curriculum, Selection, Continuous Professional Development

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, teacher education program is a hot issue across the world (Vanderlinde et al. 2013). Literature indicates teacher education as a program faces lack of competent candidates entering to the program, unwillingness to choose teacher education programs, and problem of turning away from the profession (Coburn & Russell, 2008; Cochran-Smith, 2003; European Union, 2007; Rots, Kelchtermans & Aelterman, 2012; Talis, 2008; Valcke, Struyven, & Rots, 2012). Countries are working hard to improve the quality of the education systems which aim at improving the life of its citizens and maintain sustainable development in all aspects and Ethiopia is one of those countries.

The Ethiopian Education Policy of the transition government mainly focused on improving access, equity, relevance, quality and efficiency of the education system. Following the implementation of the policy in 1994, focus was given to teacher education as the major agent to implement the changes in the policy (curricular change, change in pedagogical practices to participatory constructivist approach, formative assessment, the changing role of teachers etc.) (MoE, 1994).

To build the capacity of teacher education and improve the quality of teacher education, the ministry of education introduced innovative ideas and active learning methods, information communication technology based learning, assessment for learning, lesson study, continuous professional development, strengthening mathematics and science Education (SMASE), educational action research and higher diploma programs were introduced to support training in college of teacher educations.

Moreover, Ethiopian ministry of education has been conducting education sector development plans (ESDP) for the last twenty five years. The implementation of ESDP 1 to ESDP 5 has brought a significant achievement on access to education. An emphasis was given to teacher education reforms is still underweight. In fact, ESDPs aimed at school teachers' lifelong professional learning but could not bring significant change (MoE, 2021).

Regardless of these efforts to improve effectiveness of teacher education programs, the overall preparation process of teachers has been criticized in terms of better-quality education for student teachers which enable them to develop the required knowledge, attitude and skills. The criticism is reflected on objectives, content knowledge, ways of practical teaching experiences, instructional methods, assessment techniques used, and motivation towards their profession and commitment (UNICEF, 2010; Workneh and Tassew, 2013).

In the dynamic world, teaching is under pressure by many factors including fast growth of knowledge and changing concepts, advancement in technology and innovation, the changing type of knowledge and skills needed for the 21st century, change in pedagogical practices and the shifting role of teachers and so on (Scott, 2015). Under such circumstances, initial teacher preparation is not sufficient to be effective in teaching and hence teachers need to engage in continuous professional learning. According to Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) effective professional development is required to bring significant change to teaching profession. Moreover, the type of philosophy and knowledge bases around which teacher education curriculum is organized (including selection of specific subjects & contents, experiences, pedagogical practices, coherence, connections between theory and practices etc.) could severely affect the attainment of the desired goal of preparing effective teachers (Hammerness et al., 2005).

It can be argued that the image of teaching profession and using well designed selection & retaining criteria could help to recruit motivated high achiever candidates. In this respect, UNESCO (2012) states that in order to attract and retain good teachers, policymakers need to improve teacher education, improve the status of teachers and teaching profession, improve management system and provide incentives.

Statement of the problem

A national study conducted by MoE indicated that the questions of quality education after the reform in 2013 still continued in terms of subject knowledge, professional competency of teachers and professionalism in the teacher education program (MoE, 2016). On top of this, Olkaba, Hunde, Mamo, Duresa, and Keno (2019) recommended reforming the teacher training system with the view to better tailor its modalities, curriculum and program structure to contemporary needs. Different reforms and changes were done; the quality of teacher education program in Ethiopia was still under confusion. Ample researches were done by different scholars on teacher education program. This paper tried to investigate major challenges with regard to teacher education curriculum, selection criteria and professional developments and discuss possible solutions that could help to bridge the gap.

General objective

The objective of this study is to investigate the tension between selection, curriculum and professional development in Ethiopian college of teacher education.

Specific objectives

- To identify the major issues and challenges related to selection of candidates.
- To identify the major issues and challenges related to college of teacher education curriculum.
- To identify the major issues and challenges related to teacher professional development.

Research questions

The paper addresses the following three research questions:

- What are the major issues and challenges related to selection of candidates?
- What are the major issues and challenges related to college of teacher education curriculum?
- What are the major issues and challenges related to teacher professional development?

Method and Materials

Qualitative data were collected from documents prepared by teacher education colleges, regional education Bureau and teacher education curriculum. The data were collected based on the relevance to the context and recent developments of the topic under investigation. The data gathered through document analysis were thematized (into the selection of the student teachers, content of the teacher education curriculum and teachers continuous professional developments), analyzed and interpreted. Finally, conclusion and way-out was forwarded.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Challenges in Selection

Student selection is the process of picking or choosing the right candidates, who is most suitable for the desired objective. It is the process of interviewing the candidates and evaluating their qualities, which are necessary for a specific teaching profession. The selection of right candidates for the right positions will help the teachers' institution to achieve its desired goals and objectives. The

tasks in the selection process are designed for candidates to collect information which may be used to determine the relative quality of each applicant for a specific task, but the tasks themselves do not describe the candidate selection process adequately (Bolton, 1970).

In today's education system, it is known that education is entangled with complex problems of significance, quality, accessibility and equity. Selection of candidate for teacher education might be affected by many factors such as perception for college of teacher education, image for profession, problems in selection policy, the result and the required number of candidates, gender, age, economic status, and place or location (Kapur, 2016).

The study conducted by Gadisa, Dawit, and Mosisa (2020) on selection indicates the guideline document is good but the recruitment criterion does not invite higher academic achiever. Higher academic achiever students have no interest to be a teacher because of low salary. Teaching is among the least paid monthly salary profession in Ethiopia. No one wants to be a teacher. Moreover, it is not teachers who develop recruitment criteria. The guideline for selection and requirement of teacher education is prepared by non-professional delegates of the regional bureau and college administration. This could be one factor that deteriorates the quality of teacher education selection in Ethiopia.

The study conducted by Befekadu and Dejene (2017) states majority of the applicants use this profession only as a temporary shelter until they secure another job. The selection and recruitment criteria of the trainees to the teaching profession for the lower primary schools was found to be transparent and revised every year based on various factors. The selection criterion set is very clear and invites candidates who completed grade twelve, who failed to join universities, are invited to apply for the teaching profession. What to be underlined here is that none of the students have willing to join teaching profession except they have not option to go.

Applicants for the teaching profession are those who failed to get other opportunities in other fields or professions such as technical and vocational education and trainings (TVETs) and nursing school in the country. The applicants used teaching profession as the last alternative and as a transition to other employment opportunities. They join teaching profession with no interest. This has a direct effect on the quality of the graduates from teacher education colleges and thereby affects the quality of education offered in the lower primary schools in the country.

The applicants' selection guideline prepared by regional education bureaus indicated that female applicants, even if their performance is less than male, are given more chance of being selected. For instance, if male and female applicants have equal performance or GPA, giving the priority for the female applicant may be logically sound. However, admitting an applicant whose performance is by far below the others simply because of gender will influence the quality of education.

Teacher Education Curriculum

Even though the importance of technology in education is well understood by the government and policy makers, education in Ethiopia has traditionally been centered on sources such as schools, teachers and textbooks (MoE, 2021). This means students can only acquire knowledge through the teaching and learning process, through presentation and direct contact with the teacher in the classroom. Ethiopian education system lacks ICT infrastructure and internet service in schools, appropriate institutional level ICT policy guideline, planning, integrating technology in education, ICT knowledge and awareness, and technical and leadership support in educational institutions, which are among the key challenges that hinders the integrative use of technology in education (MoE, 2021).

Due to the global transformation into a digital system, modern society wants to know information as it happens and when it happens, and the world is moving from an information society to a knowledge society. In the 21st century, any education and training system, educational management and administration, and information-based monitoring, evaluation, and decision-making

systems can only be effective if they are used within the framework of information and communication technology development (MoE, 2021).

ICT learning materials accessible to all students to acquire knowledge, skills and abilities required. It helps students to easily understand the content and improve their achievement. It also helps the students to improve information management in schools and facilitate information exchange.

In 21st century skills requires higher-order skills such as critical thinking, creativity, scientific temperament, communication, collaboration/teamwork, multilingualism, reasoning, problem solving, ethics, social responsibility, and digital literacy will be developed in learners from all sectors (MoE, 2021).

Curriculum framework, textbooks and the process and approaches to teaching and learning in the classroom better to redesign and applied in such a way that they contain shared values, promote national unity in diversity, and serve as tools for building community cohesion in a sustainable manner.

Curriculum of teacher education have great responsibility in preparing well equipped new graduate teachers and enhance school teachers' capacity through in-service and induction programs. It is important to investigate teacher education curriculum and identify the gaps for further improvement. Thus, the researchers evaluated the existing teachers training curriculum and come up with the following results.

a. Overview of Primary Teacher Education Curriculum

Prior to the implementation of Teachers Education System Overhaul (TESO) program in 2003/4, primary teachers were trained for one year duration and awarded certificate for teaching grade 1 – 8. TESO has transformed teacher education system in all aspects. Training duration became 2 or 3 years and teacher candidates graduated with diploma. The content of the training shifted to more of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) and methods of teaching from teacher centered to student centered. Assessment focused on improving teaching and learning through continuous assessment.

TESO program introduced variety of changes in program, modality and approaches in teacher education system. At the beginning, two years diploma program was introduced in which teachers prepared to teach two subjects (major and minor subjects). The two years program was changed to three years and stream based cluster system was introduced in which teachers are expected to teach three subjects. Due to the mismatch of the college curriculum and primary school curriculum, the program was again revised in 2013 to incorporate three different approaches to curriculum: Generalist approach for training first cycle (Grade 1 – 4) primary school teachers, integrative approach for grades 5 & 6 and linear (major-minor) approach for grade 7 & 8. Currently, these approaches are being used to prepare teachers for different levels of the primary school teaching.

These days, there are about 39 colleges of teacher education in the country. These colleges provide training in two programs: pre-service and in-service. In-service program mainly focus on upgrading teachers from certificate to diploma level.

Standards were set for primary school teachers which includes: know students and how they learn; know the content and how to teach; plan for and implement effective teaching and learning; create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments; assess, provide feedback and report on student learning; engage in professional learning; and engage professionally with colleagues, parents' or care givers and the community (MoE, 2013). Generally, primary teacher education program grounded on the knowledge base of teaching composed of six components. These are: subject matter/content, general education/pedagogical knowledge and skill, pedagogical content knowledge, practicum/field experiences, common courses and seminars and research. Educational technology did not get emphasis to be incorporated as focus area.

b. Analysis of College of Teachers Education Curriculum

1. Environmental science (Generalist) and Mathematics (1-4 Grades) curriculum

The following table presents the pedagogical knowledge (PK), content knowledge (CK), and technological knowledge (TK) in Generalist College of teacher education curriculum.

Table 1.1 Course proportion for Generalist grade 1 – 4

Components	No of courses	Total credit	%	Core contents
Common courses	9	22	20.37	English, Mother tongue, mathematics, social studies, civic & ethical education and Art
Subject matter content knowledge	10	32	29.63	Mathematics, chemistry, biology, natural science, geography
ICT and media utilization	1	2(1+1)	1.85	Instructional Media and Information Technology in Primary Schools
General Education/Pedagogical Knowledge and Skill	8	22	20.37	Application of Theories of Learning , Curriculum & instruction, Inclusive Education, Child Development and Learning, general methods, cross-cutting issues, assessment and classroom management
Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK)	6	15	13.89	Teaching specific contents
Practicum/field experiences	4	12	11.11	School environment, classroom observation and management, lesson plan and supportive resource preparation, assisting the mentor, action research project and independent teaching
Action research and seminar	2	3	2.78	Action research theoretical framework and seminar work in education
Total	40	108	100	

2. Integrated grade 5 & 6 college of teacher education curriculum

Table 1.2 Course proportion of Integrated Science for grade 5 & 6

Components	No of courses	Total credit	%	Core contents
Common courses	9	22	20.56	English, Mother tongue, mathematics, social studies, civic & ethical education and Art
Subject matter content knowledge	12	36	33.65	Biology, chemistry and physics
ICT and media utilization	1	2(1+1)	1.87	Instructional Media and Information Technology in Primary Schools
General Education /Pedagogical Knowledge and Skill	8	22	20.56	Application of Theories of Learning , Curriculum & instruction, Inclusive Education, Child Development and Learning, general methods, cross-cutting issues, assessment and classroom management
Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK)	3	10	9.35	Application of pedagogical knowledge and skills in teaching specific subject matter contents
Practicum/field experiences	4	12	11.21	School environment, classroom observation and management, lesson plan and supportive resource preparation, assisting the mentor, action research project and independent teaching
Action research and seminar	2	3	2.8	Action research theoretical framework and seminar work in education
Total	39	107	100	

3. Subject specific or Linear (English) grade 7– 8 college of teacher education curriculum

Table 1.3 Course proportion for English grade 1 – 8

Components	No of courses	Total credit	%	Core contents
Common course s	9	22	20.56	Mother tongue, mathematics, social studies, civic & ethical education and Art
Subject matter content knowledge(English)	12	35	32.71	English language
ICT and media utilization	1	2(1+1)	1.87	Instructional Media and Information Technology in Primary Schools
General Education /Pedagogical Knowledge and Skill	9	25	23.37	Application of Theories of Learning , Curriculum & instruction, Inclusive Education, Child Development and Learning, general methods, cross-cutting issues, assessment and classroom management
PCK courses	3	8	7.48	Application of pedagogical knowledge and skills in teaching specific subject matter contents
Practicum courses	4	12	11.21	School environment, classroom observation and management, lesson plan and supportive resource preparation, assisting the mentor, action research project and independent teaching
Action research and seminar	2	3	2.8	Theory Action research theoretical framework and seminar work in education
Total	40	107	100	

Table 1.4 Summary of the above tables

Components	Total No. of courses given to each focus			Total No. course	Total credit	%
	Generalist	Integrating	Linear			
Common courses	9	9	9	27	66	20.50
Subject matter content knowledge(English)	10	12	12	34	103	31.99
ICT and media utilization	1	1	1	3	6	1.86
General Education /Pedagogical Knowledge and Skill	8	8	9	25	69	21.43
PCK courses	6	3	3	12	33	10.25
Practicum courses	4	4	4	12	36	11.18
Action research and seminar	2	2	2	6	9	2.80
				119	322	100.00

It can be seen from the tables above that in the curriculum, theories of learning, curriculum and instruction, inclusive education, child development and learning, general methods, cross-cutting issues, assessment and classroom management are 21.43% of the total credit. Subject matter knowledge content delivery oriented course (common courses and stream/department subjects) constitutes nearly 52.49% of the total credit. These two together mainly characterizes the cognitive aspect of the teacher education curriculum. On the other hand, the pedagogy content knowledge (PCK) courses are 10.25% of the total credit; focus on application of theories to teaching and learning specific aspects of the subjects which the trainees are expected to teach in the future. Action research and seminar constitutes of 2.8% of the total credit. The practicum course are 11.18% of the total credit, proceeds step by step through school environment observation, classroom observation and management, lesson plan and supportive resource preparation, assisting the mentor, action research project to the independent teaching practice. Finally, technology constitutes only 1.86% of the total credit for which less emphasis is given for the technology as well as PCK in the Ethiopia Teachers' Education Curriculum.

Many educators claim that integrated model of training is more beneficial because it combines important aspects of the traditional cognitive learning theory and the situated learning theory (Eyasu,

Aweke, Kassa, Mulugeta, & Yenealem, 2017; Korthagen et al., 2001). The model is mainly based on three levels: gestalt level, schema level, and theory level (Korthagen et al., 2001).

As mention by Korthagen et al. (2001), theoretical notions are not so much aimed at building academic knowledge, but at deepening and structuring gestalts and developing schemata characterized by practical knowledge that helps to guide perception and action in practice. It requires a translation and adaptation of academic theory to the specifics of the situation at hand.

The existing teacher education curriculum very likely seems subject matter content and theory focused (some of which are advanced contents like advanced calculus and linear algebra which are not aligned with primary school curriculum) and geared towards cognitive perspective (Eyasu, Amanuel & Yusuf , 2021; Eyasu et al, 2017). As mentioned by Korthagen et al. (2001), a didactic approach based on the presentation of theory starts from the wrong side of the three-level model and thus tends to create a gapbetween theory and practice. An alternative approach, such as the realistic model, can influence teacher education in a more successful way (Korthagen et al., 2001). This does make a difference for the graduates' practices (Korthagen et al., 2001).

Continuous Professional Development

The aim of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is to improve the performance of teachers in the classroom and raise student achievement. It is a career-long process of improving knowledge, skills and attitudes - centered on the local context and, particularly, classroom practice (Desta, Chalchisa and Lemma, 2013).In Ethiopia context, one of the professional competencies which achieved through CPD describes how teachers manage their own professional development and contribute to the professional development of their colleagues. Therefore, reliable information about the way CPD is implemented by the stakeholders, the challenges facing the program, and the strategies to solve the problems is vital for teachers in the process of regulating and initiating new changes within the program (MoE, 2009).Support teacher capacity to teach effectively using appropriate new student-centered and problem-solving approaches according to the active-learning-based curriculum that was introduced in 1994.

According to MoE (2009) CPD encountered challenges such as CPD facilitators high turnover, time constraints on teachers and school leaders, lagging behind and the tendency of rushing to cover the course, lack of budget to run the program at teachers education and school level, total absence or inadequacy of the minimum resources to run CPD, the total absence or stack of the finance to run CPD such as GEQIP, Lack of systematic coordination between the education bureaus, Teacher Education Institutions and NGOs, lack of interest, initiative and commitment by some teachers especially highly experienced teachers, lack of knowledge and experience on the theoretical underpinnings, implementation inconsistencies, lack of uniformity in implementation, confusion. According to Ashebir (2014) the failure to allocate budget and lack of CPD materials, absence of career structure in the actions of CPD, was to be found the problems that hinder the effective implementation of school based CPD. On the other hand, absence of giving feedback from the concerned bodies, lack of commitment of teachers to practice CPD actions, failure to organize training on CPD programs.

CONCLUSIONS

The main issues that have been taken into account in this study are challenges in selection criteria of candidates, CTEs curriculum and CPD programthrough document analysis we have identified the following issues as challenge in Ethiopian Teachers Education that may influence the quality of education and generating competent prospective teachers.

The challenges faced with regard to selection are the way the recruitment guideline prepared and implemented, poor salary and different incentives, high achiever were not involved in the computation and the prospective competent are the residual that remains from the other professions

and it is also provided by quota system. The other challenge was the teacher education curriculum was not aligned with primary school curriculum, curriculum was not in TPAKC integrated manner and the implement action research are not in appropriate time as well as no attention is given.

Finally, the main challenges with regard to CPD the problem of relevance which is given in the same manner for all teachers and institutions which is not contextualized. In addition to these challenges also problems like: time constraints, programs lagging behind its time and the tendency of rushing to cover the course, lack of budget, coordination gap between the education bureaus, CTEs and NGOs, lack of interest, initiative and commitment especially teachers with long teaching experience, lack of knowledge and experience on the theoretical underpinnings, implementation inconsistencies, absence of career structure in the actions of CPD and absence of giving feedback from the concerned bodies were to be found the problems that hinder the effective implementation of school based CPD and those the total sum might hinder the quality of education in Ethiopian CTEs.

Way-out

The findings revealed that there are challenges concerning selection criterion for prospective teachers, alignment of college of teacher education curriculum with primary school and continuous professional development in Ethiopian college of teacher education. Overall, thus findings point to the following major way-out.

The guideline for recruitment criterion of selection of perspective teachers should invite higher academic achiever (students who have higher education entrance exam results) and candidates who have high motivation and interest for teaching profession. Therefore, the Ethiopia government should give more attention on teacher's development such as paying high salary, fulfilling basic needs and guarantee their security so that candidates of high achiever be attracted. Besides, placement of the perspective teachers should be made by ministry of education not by the regional education bureau.

Ethiopian ministry of education better to take the initiatives to involve others stakeholders (NGOs and higher education institutions) to work closely on training and the development of CPD program in teachers education. To develop the capacity and knowledge of mentoring and facilitating CPD practices, there should be persistent support for mentors and facilitators. Hence, it is essential for MOE officials to provide the necessary training and support to college level actors. Assigning CPD coordinators and mentors at the college level should be strengthened with all college of teacher education. It is important for the MOE, College of Teacher education to provide the necessary material and financial support for college in order to smoothly running of CPD program implementation

The curriculum of college of teacher education in Ethiopia better to align with the primary school curriculum, TPACK model incorporate with curriculum of teacher education and better to give more attention to practical application in the classroom environment rather than theories and action research could be exercised.

Finally, the researchers identified several contextual problems and challenges of teacher education in Ethiopia such as admission of low quality candidates, low quality curriculum and lack of relevant CPD program in CTEs could have contributed to low quality graduate teachers. Addressing these critical challenges require further in-depth-investigation in the area. On the other hand, only limited research has been done so far in relation to selection, curriculum and teachers professional development issues in teacher education program. Moreover, there is a need for further research in the area to support technology integration in education and introduce additional emerging technologies in the system as well.

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