

Policy Debate in Ethiopian Teacher Education: Retrospection and Future Direction

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Abstract

Though, Ethiopia registered an extraordinary achievement in terms of increasing student enrolment, still quality of education remains a challenge and is becoming a bottleneck. One of the problems might be the structure and nature of teacher education itself. The purpose of this study therefore was to critically examine the existing literature and policy documents and come up with effective as well as valuable modality of teacher education which will be workable in Ethiopian context. In Ethiopia, there are two extreme views that can be taken as challenges for teacher education program: pedagogical knowledge vs. subject matter knowledge. There is also contention on the modality of teacher education: concurrent vs. consecutive. The study show that the greatest ever challenge in teacher education is registered during the Post-TESO period. The program is troubled. Based on the results of this study, imperative implications for practice are forwarded.

Key terms: teacher education, concurrent model, consecutive model, driving force, curriculum structure

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Introduction

In the Ethiopian context, formal schooling is largely organized and controlled by the government. For instance issues such as the goal of schooling and how these goals will be measured, what textbooks are used? and so on is directly considered to be the mandate of the government. These issues are the values imbedded in individuals and wider society (Apple, 2003). It is policy that directs such values or it is through these values that policy develops. Policy can be taken as the collection of laws and rules that govern the operation of a given programs. This conception of policy seeks to reflect the complexity of the policy development process (Bell& Stevenson, 2006). Despite issues of policy conception, implementation of policy directives varies among interpretation groups and does not warrant unique action. This leads into various approaches that ultimately guide varying reform initiatives. The purpose of this article is not directed towards the policy development process, but to understand policy reforms in Ethiopian teacher education from 1991 to date and to investigate the merit and demerits of the reforms for the betterment and improvement of current and future teacher education policy in general.

Among the human elements involved in the execution of educational policy, teachers would be regarded as having the most significant role to play in the learning process. In the Ethiopian context, the policy on teacher education and training emphasizes on basic knowledge, professional code of ethics, methodology and practical trainings in such a way that teachers are endowed with the necessary teaching qualification and competency through pre-service and in-service training (ETP, 1994). The policy also confirmed that teachers have to be certified before assigned to teach at any level of education.

Despite the policy statements experience has shown that in Ethiopia varying reforms have been performed. This raises then questions such as: How does teacher education program change in Ethiopia over years? What are the limitations of teacher education policies introduced after 1991? How does the current status of teacher education be improved? To get a comprehensible answer to these questions, the following section discusses policy issues in the global scenario, and based on the available secondary sources, this study tried to investigate teacher education in retrospection and provide way forward.

Teacher Education Modalities across the World

Though scholars suggest varying conceptions, one of the factors that determine the modality of teacher education is the structural arrangement of the subject matter and pedagogical courses in the curriculum. This issue produces a debate globally regarding the balance between the subject matter and the pedagogy for teaching (Brown, 2011; Eryaman & Riedler 2010). Despite the disagreements, knowledge of the learning process, pedagogy and academic content are all important components of good teaching (Eryaman & Riedler 2009). There is also a debate between the campus-based course work and the school-based field experience (Brown, 2011). Because of this debate, teacher education experiences different reforms.

There are many modalities of teacher education in the world, among the most common ones are concurrent/ blended (the B.ED program in Ethiopia) and the consecutive /end-on/add-on model (called PGDT in Ethiopia currently underway). In the case of concurrent model subject matter, pedagogical and educational courses are given at the same time, whereas in the case of consecutive model subject matter courses are first given and an individual is certified for that followed by pedagogical and educational training. Some countries use both models side by side. For instance: Malaysia, India (UNESCO, 1990) and also countries like China, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong-Kong, Japan, Gorgia and Singapore (Schwille, et al.,2013) adopt both concurrent and consecutive modalities.

In Canada, there are two routes to graduation at teacher education institutions. The first one is the concurrent/blended and the second is consecutive/ PGDT (CME, 2008). Consecutive programs require candidates to first obtain an academic degree in order to be accepted into a program of studies

in education. The consecutive program is concentrated in one or two years (two to four semesters). The duration is related to certification requirements; for example, a two-year program following a first degree is the minimum requirement for certification in Nova Scotia, while a one-year program is required for certification in Ontario (CME, 2008). According to the Council of Ministry of Education (CME), in Canada, some institutions offer only one route, while others offer both routes. The general trend across most provinces is toward consecutive programs. The exception is Quebec, where almost all programs offer concurrent studies. There is a strong incentive for upgrading academic credentials built into their salary scales; because of this most teachers continue their academic education beyond the first degree. For this reason, it is common for teachers to possess two undergraduate degrees. In any event, two degrees is the normal outcome of consecutive teacher education programs.

There is a general agreement that during their study, pre-service teachers need to know about the subject matter and the way of delivering it in the classroom and also the nature of students. Researchers identified the following as a course requirement in teacher education (Aklilu, Alemayehu & Mekasha, 2008):

- ✚ General education
- ✚ Teaching specialization
- ✚ Educational foundations: history of education, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, educational psychology, learning theories, measurement and evaluation
- ✚ General and special methods of teaching
- ✚ Field experience (practicum)

Particularly in Ethiopia, the ministry of education outlined seven national standards for teachers (MOE, 2012):

- 1. Know students and how they learn** **professional knowledge**
- 2. Know the content and how to teach it**
- 3. Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning**
- 4. Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments**
- 5. Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning** **professional practice**
- 6. Engage in professional learning**
- 7. Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/care givers and the community** **professional engagement**

However, there is a controversy on the degree of mix between subject matter and pedagogy that should make up the curriculum for teacher education program. This usually results as a consequence of the attempts to ensure ownership and meet personal benefits among teacher educators. In Ethiopia, there are two extreme positions that can be taken as challenges for teacher education program. One extreme hold that the program should be directed towards equipping prospective teachers with strong subject matter knowledge. The other extreme hold that the program should be directed towards equipping prospective teachers mostly with knowledge of pedagogy and general education. This extreme view undermines or neglects the role of subject matter knowledge, because lack of understanding of the principles of the subject matter impede good teaching especially in mathematics (Mulkeen, DeJaeghere, Leu & Bryner, 2005). So the pedagogical knowledge should be blended with subject matter knowledge.

One of the famous scholars to introduce the notion of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is Lee Shulman. In 1986 he created increased attention to subject matter knowledge unique to teaching. Shulman reframed the study of teacher knowledge in ways that attend to the role of content in teaching. He specified seven categories of a knowledge base for teaching (1987): knowledge of content, knowledge of curriculum, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of pedagogy,

knowledge of learners and learning, knowledge of contexts of schooling, and knowledge of educational philosophies, goals and objectives. Shulman's content knowledge component includes both the amount of the subject knowledge as well as the organizing structure of the subject (Shulman, 1987), "it is beyond knowledge of the facts or concepts of a domain" (p. 9).

Hence, teachers must know and be able to explain under what conditions a particular proposition can hold true. According to Shulman, teachers should have knowledge of the substantive structures of a discipline, the variety of ways in which the basic concepts and principles of the discipline are organized to incorporate its facts and of the syntactic structure, which is "the set of ways in which truth or falsehood, validity or invalidity are established" (Shulman, 1986, p. 9). The third category, pedagogical content knowledge, is the category most likely to distinguish the understanding of the content specialist from that of the pedagogue (Shulman, 1987, p. 8). It comprises the most useful forms of representation of those ideas, the most powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations and demonstrations.

Pedagogical content knowledge also includes an understanding of what makes the learning of specific topics easy or difficult: the conceptions and preconceptions that students of different ages and backgrounds bring with them to the learning of those most frequently taught topics and lessons (Eryaman & Genc, 2010). However, with the emergence of technology, there is also a remarkable progress in improving students' achievement. Mishra & Koehler (2006) argues that technologies have come to the forefront of educational discourse primarily because of the availability of a range of new, primarily digital, technologies and requirements for learning how to apply them in the classroom teaching. Thus they proposed the necessity for the integration of technology with PCK and named the resulting amalgam knowledge as technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPCK). Kassa in his study also entitled *Integrating Content, Pedagogy and Technology for Enhancing Quality of Education* affirmed that the proper usage of TPCK helps fill gaps during instructional process and empowers the visualization ability of learners by reducing effect of abstractions (Kassa, 2015). In spite of those arguments, teacher education in Ethiopia has been reformed a number of times where the reform effects were largely on credit hour rearrangement between subject matter and pedagogy focus (Azeb, 1990; Akllilu et al 2008) and on structural modality as concurrent or add on. The following section presents the structure and nature of teacher education in Ethiopia at different times during post 1991.

The Structure of Teacher Education Program in Ethiopia during Post 1991

The notion of teacher education in Ethiopia was started after the Italian occupation in 1944 at Menelik II School. This is the first teacher education program in the history of modern education in Ethiopia which was suggested by the British council to establish an institution for the training of teachers.

After the dawn fall of the Derg and the emergence of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) in 1991, teacher education comprises three forms: certificate and diploma given by both private and government colleges and bachelor degree given by government universities. After facing quality problems at private level, currently teacher education by private institutions is totally closed. The certificate level trainings were also closed for the sake of upgrading teachers' profile (ESDP IV, 2010) and were transformed to host diploma programs. Hence currently, the minimum teacher qualification in Ethiopia is diploma. Thus currently, it is evident that teacher education is undertaken only in government institutions. Accordingly, there are 36 Colleges of teacher education that offer diploma program and 33 Universities offering a bachelor degree programs. But the post graduate diploma program in teaching (PGDT) a sequential/add on form of teacher education program is being conducted in twenty selected universities in Ethiopia after the issuance of the framework in 2009 (MoE, 2009).

Selection requirements for primary school teaching at college level include a minimum of 2.00 in the grade 10 national examinations ((EGSSLE), no "F" grades in mathematics or English and a minimum of "C" in special subjects. Applicants are also required to take entrance exam and are given

interview to assess interpersonal skills and motivation. There are two types of training in the diploma program. The first one is cluster training for grades 1 to 4 and the second is a linear training for grades 5 to 8. Teacher training for kindergarten school which was given only by Kotebe University College (currently upgraded to Metropolitan University) is newly launched at all colleges of teacher education.

The reforms that were implemented between 1995 and 2002 focused on incremental changes including revision of curricula according to the views of the existing government, introduction of local languages as a medium of instruction (for primary school teacher preparation), and modification of recruitment criteria for teacher candidates. The teacher education reforms made by this government can be categorized as Pre-TESO (1991-2002), TESO (2003-2009) and Post-TESO (2010 onwards). It is evident that teacher education in Ethiopia after 1991 has shown remarkable introductions and revisions largely TESO and PGDT. The following presents some of the backgrounds, developments and associated views on each of these reforms.

The Emergence of Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO)

As a consequence of the study conducted with a title “The Quality and Effectiveness of the Teacher Education System in Ethiopia” (MoE, 2002), this system of teacher education was introduced in 2003/2004. One of the findings of the study was, unprofessionalism of teachers (MOE, 2002) and (Dahlström, 2007), which forces the introduction of TESO and its nature to focus on the integration of pedagogical training with the subject matter. The length of the training was reduced from 4 to 3 (Aklilu, et al., 2008). The core issue of the reform revolved around the reduction of the training duration of secondary teacher preparation (the BED program) and admission requirements of certificate and diploma programs (primary teacher preparation) (Tesfaye, 2014). Still the candidates entitled to join the diploma programs are those who earned very low GPAs (in the EGSLCE) and were unable to join the preparatory school.

TESO was introduced by arguing that the old system was entangled with multiple drawbacks (MOE, 2003). According to this study the following factors necessitated the introduction of a paradigm shift in Ethiopian education system:

- The professional competence of teachers is deficient
- Inability of existing teacher educators to become professional teacher educator
- Absence of a link between teacher educator and schools. Educators didn't know the school situation
- The recruitment of teacher educators for secondary education was not based on interest
- The content knowledge of teachers is unsatisfactory
- The training was not school and community based
- Lack of commitment and interest of educators to the teaching profession
- The curriculum was irrelevant and the teaching-learning process was teacher-centered and undemocratic
- The Practicum receives inadequate emphasis and is inefficiently implemented at all levels of teacher education
- Reflective teaching was totally absent
- Teaching profession was undermined
- Teacher education colleges were not well organized to meet objectives
- Action research was given little or no attention at all levels of teacher education

Hence TESO was introduced to solve all the above issues by educating teachers in a holistic process that connects ideas and disciplines to each other and to personal experiences, environment and communities of students (MOE, 2003). The main goal of this integrated program was creating teachers who extend their roles beyond the classroom. In this type of training, prospective teachers are endowed with pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) which is a blend of both pedagogy and content knowledge. According to Shulman (1987) this type of knowledge is a particular form of content

knowledge that is useful for teaching specific subject. However the TESO program faced a great challenge in some universities by the fact that subject knowledge is the responsibility of one faculty and pedagogical issues for other faculty (Aklilu, et al., 2008). Of all the above identified weaknesses to justify the introduction of TESO were the same old problems that persisted and again were the reason for the demise of the TESO program. Hence we agree with the conclusion of (Tesfaye, 2014) that there is no continuity between the new and previous policies of teacher education.

After six years of actual implementation, it has been decided to totally close the program using the same drawbacks as the previous program. The main reason for this repeated problem is that the absence of pilot study and the top down policy formulation process. The reforms can be taken as a driving force triggered to initiate the required change. According to Lewin (1951) this force creates increased antagonism and unwillingness to do in the required direction unless the power of the restraining force is reduced. Similarly, Sarson (1990) argues that if educational reform elements are addressed in isolation, while some are changed and others not, the success of the reform is undermined. That is significant a change in policy is unlikely to be successful unless attention is also paid to teacher development and societal needs. So, creating consensus among educators as to why the existing way of doing things cannot continue is the forefront issue for the issuance of the new reform. However in Ethiopian teacher education, similar problems persist in the implementation of the new reform which diminishes quality of education from time to time. Some of the problems in the reform were lack of emphasis on local conditions, provide insufficient time and resource, ignoring teacher involvement (Tesfaye, 2014; Kedir, 2007), non involvement of professional associations and communities (Kedir, 2007) and also failure to conduct pilot study.

Recent Reform in Secondary School Teacher Education Program

The replacement of TESO by Post-graduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT) initially faced a lot of resistance from faculty members (Koye & Yonas, 2013; Tesfaye, 2014). According to the curriculum framework for secondary school teacher education program (MoE, 2009), till recently, it hasn't had strong policy. Even after having the needed policy, according to the document, the program has been in trouble. The same document further explains that the teacher education in the country is still straggling to produce teachers who are competent in subject areas and can effectively promote the learning of students in schools. Thus, it is evident that the academic tradition focuses on the importance of disciplinary knowledge for prospective teachers, gained through a classical liberal arts education combined with an apprenticeship in schools.

The framework states that the very intension of the new teacher training program (PGDT) is to alleviate the problems that appeared in the previous teacher training system (TESO). The major problems in secondary teachers' capacity and performance identified in 2008 by Ministry of Education were:

- ✓ Teachers' subject matter competence is inadequate,
- ✓ Active learning methods are not properly and sufficiently employed,
- ✓ Professional commitment and work ethics are not demonstrated as desired,
- ✓ Teachers' interest to follow up and assist students is low.
- ✓ According to the framework, the admission criteria to the PGDT are as follows:
- ✓ B.Sc or B.A in areas directly related to secondary school subjects,
- ✓ Teaching profession ethical standards,
- ✓ Interview and Entrance Examination (Subject matter, English language and aptitude).

This is conducted to:

- Assess students' readiness, disposition and motivation to become secondary school teachers.
- Assess students' language and communication skills.
- Assess any previous engagement with children or school

PGDT program was supposed to be given in regular program consisting of three terms. Unfortunately, it was started in 2011 in summer modality for the first time. This is because of the fact that there were no bachelor of education graduates in 2011 throughout the country and because of that regional education bureaus faced shortage of teachers in the 2011/2012 academic year (Koye & Yonas, 2013). The summer basis continues till the end of 2014/2015 academic year. But the situation was ruined and the regular basis started in 2015/2016 academic year in addition to the situated summer program. Thus it is evident that the program faced a challenge from the begging.

The reasons listed above for the issuance of the PGDT are not clear enough to totally close the previous TESO program. For instance, teachers' interest is considered as one of the criteria to select or admit applicants to the PGDT program and it is believed that the PGDT student teachers joined the profession because they love it as to solve the previous problems. But, research shows that student teachers who joined the PGDT program were not totally motivated and committed enough for their leanings and the profession (Koye, 2014; Tesfaye, 2014, Kassa, 2014). Worku (2015) also found that the mentoring process of PGDT is problematic. That is the mentees were overloaded; appropriate mentors were not assigned by schools (assigning mentors disregarding their field of study), mentees were assigned at primary schools (the level which they were not supposed to work at nor prepared and trained for). Thus, the program is entangled with the problem of inefficiency in attracting motivated and committed students. The problem seems much stronger than the previous program.

The current PGDT students believe that teachers and teaching profession receive low social respect by other professionals and they joined the teaching profession because of lack of other options, but not because they love it. This may indicate that they are living in the profession till they get other options and using teaching as a spring board to look for other profession and may not exert their maximum effort (Koye, 2014). This situation is now common in Ethiopia. For instance the study conducted by Aweke (2015) shows that teachers are working with poor motivation and they don't want to remain as a teacher for one day if they get the chance to leave the profession. Hence the teaching profession is associated with high quit intention and turn over, low motivation and inefficient teacher preparation. To help infer implication for policy makers the following paragraph will discuss about the advantage and disadvantage of the two modalities, though (Tefaye, 2014) believes the challenge surrounding teacher education is the poor attraction of teaching as a career rather than the modality.

It is clear that there is no absolutely effective teacher education model. Both the concurrent and consecutive models have their own strength and weaknesses. the advantages of the concurrent/blended modality is that the duration is relatively shorter, Pre-service teachers get a chance to integrate pedagogy with subject matter (PCK) (Shulman, 1987) which is a basic skill needed in the teaching profession. On the other hand the consecutive/add-on/ PGDT model is assumed to be problematic since it recruits candidate who already had bachelor degree and also it is time consuming (Tefaye, 2008). The basic limitation is that it does not allow students to integrate content and pedagogy, particularly in Ethiopia where there is absence of wages for the additional one year training and professionally untrained individuals are recruited as teachers. On the other hand an advantage of it is that it gives chance to join the profession for those working in other sector and who may decide and love to be a teacher. It also insures adequate subject matter knowledge (Tefaye, 2008). The points discussed above entail the need for careful move towards reforming teacher education. In support of this the College of Education of Addis Ababa University published a paper entitled Teacher Education System in Ethiopia: A Need for an Informed Decision (CoE, 2008) which is a useful guide in this endeavor.

Conclusion and Policy Implication

One of the policy debates in Ethiopia during post 1991 emanated due to two extreme views. That is equipping prospective teachers with strong subject matter knowledge and equipping prospective teachers mostly with knowledge of pedagogy and general education. These extreme views produce contention on the modality of teacher education. But, each reforms are associated with lack of

emphasis on local conditions, insufficient time and resource, ignorance of teacher and student involvement (Tesfaye, 2014; Kedir, 2007), non involvement of professional associations and communities (Kedir, 2007) and also failure to conduct pilot study. Due to this and other pitfalls teacher education in Ethiopia and education in general are compromised of quality problems.

Regarding the modality of teacher education, graduates of the concurrent and consecutive model perform nearly the same (CME, 2008). But in Ethiopia, research shows that graduates of consecutive model/PGDT are underrepresented both in pedagogical skill, subject matter and professional commitment (Dejene, 2015; Koye & Yonas, 2013). For instance, though the PGDT program is assumed to assure good subject matter knowledge, students fail to score the minimum requirement 50% on the entrance examination for PGDT (Koye & Yonas, 2013). Thus the program is not on the way of achieving its goal. This in turn implies the decline of teacher quality. Thus it is evident to say that Ethiopia is on a crisis regarding the education system, suffering of poor teacher preparation. It is common to hear that achievement of students and their engagement is poor. Therefore, teacher education is associated with many problems starting from those low performing student joining the profession who are unwilling and with poor motivation and commitment.

Several studies made to reveal the situation of teacher turnover and high quit intention (Aweke, 2015, Koye, 2014; Tesfaye, 2008; Tesfaye, 2014;) calls for the improvement of both financial incentives and working conditions so as to attract high caliber students to the teaching profession. Teachers suffer by the low amount of salary and because of that they are undermined in the society. Thus the current status of teachers need improvement and this should not be left aside since teachers are the main role player in the education system.

As the teaching profession is a key in the human capital accumulation, there should be a fully fledged well designed structure to train teachers. In the current scenario students just join the profession temporarily as a transition for any other profession. This deficit is leading the country into crisis in the history of modern education. Thus it is strongly suggested that Ethiopia quickly adapt the concurrent/ blended modality into the system and give the responsibility for some universities with legal and full autonomy to evolve as a university of education with the aim of training teachers accordingly. This does not mean that the consecutive/ PGDT modality should be ignored. This modality is good to attract candidates from other faculty who really love the profession. Hence both the concurrent and the consecutive modalities are equally important and should evolve together.

Another important implication is to make the consecutive program attractive by instilling incentives on it. This is to attract candidates and for the reason that this study is a post-graduate study and so students must gain comparatively more incentives to join this program. Countries like Canada benefits more on this regard and students inclined towards this program in general due to the attractive salary built into their salary scale. It is clear that the Ethiopian people rely on the economic return of education. Thus salaries and benefits should not be ignored in developing a new policy that increase study years to some extent.

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