

Implementation of Higher Diploma Training in Educators' Instructional Process at three Colleges of Teachers Education of Oromia Region (Ethiopia)

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Abstract

This study examines the extent to what the program implemented in educators' instructional process. A survey research method of mixed approach was employed by which observation, questionnaire and interview were used as data gathering tools. As a result, the overall extent to which the programme is being applied in the educators' instructional process was found to be not satisfactory due to session planning and action research that seen as not being practiced at all in the colleges. Besides, most limitations identified during observation overlap with that of our pre-service teachers diagnosed during independent teaching practice. As influential factors, three potential challenges were found and discussed in line with the desired recommendations.

Keywords

Reflective Practice; Managing Learning; Active Learning; Assessment



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INTRODUCTION

A study conducted by the Ministry of Education revealed that Ethiopian teacher-educators failed to make a reasonable effort in professional development. Instructional processes were found to be teacher dominated talks or lectures (TESO, 2003: 2). The same study recommended the establishment of Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) of which higher diploma programme (HDP) is one key

initiative, designed and launched since 2003 (MoE, 2011a: 4; Tadesse et al., 2016: 11). According to the resulting guideline and handbook quality of educators' instruction is ascribed in terms of reflectiveness, managing learning, and reflective action research practice.

The first perspective focuses on reflective practice of which reflective teaching is a core feature, and refers to active, persistent, careful consideration of

any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends (MoE, 2011a: 6; Tadesse et al., 2016: 15). According to this perspective, when teachers confronted with certain situations, they should act in thoughtful ways (MoE, 2011a: 13; Schnellert, Richardson & Cherkowski, 2014: 233). The second part focuses on managing learning which is believed to make learning fruitful ultimately, and targets enabling educators to maintain knowledge (MoE, 2011a: 48). It targets explicitly appropriate use of varieties of active learning and assessment approaches (MoE, 2011: 48; Tadesse et al., 2016: 17).

The third perspective focuses on action research that aims at equipping educators with the desired attitudes, knowledge and skills of resolving problems they come across in their instructional process (MoE, 2011a: 104). It also deals with school or organization placement which targets enabling educators to help the respective pre-service teachers cope with the existing situation of primary and secondary schools (MoE, 2011a: 127).

Statement of the problem

The extent of what the programme is progressing can be assessed through different ways by the programme leader at the time of its delivery, which has been found very useful, if properly handled, as it lets respective candidates receive constructive feedback on what went as desired and areas of improvement during the entire process of delivery of the programme.

Despite the considerable investment employed for its delivery, however, examining its implementation was found to be almost untouched as only a few studies were conducted just at the institutional level with minimal sample size. Hence, these studies lack generalizability and could not be convincing enough to see the issue in advance and think of intervention from a national or regional point of view.

On the other hand, it is found that most of the lessons run by the educators during lesson observation of the programme's training resemble that of the respective pre-service teachers diagnosed during supervision of independent teaching practice. According to this personal observation, both strengths and limitations are mostly similar for both educators and pre-service teachers. Similar studies

revealed that the same set of constraints had been observed in the teaching-learning process of local primary schools. Therefore, it can be hypothesized in this study that the extent to which the programme were implemented in the educators' instructional process may have a vicious impact on the quality of both teacher and primary education. To this end, this study is planned to assess the extent to what the programme is being implemented in the classroom in a broader way by taking regional colleges of teachers' education.

Purpose of the Study

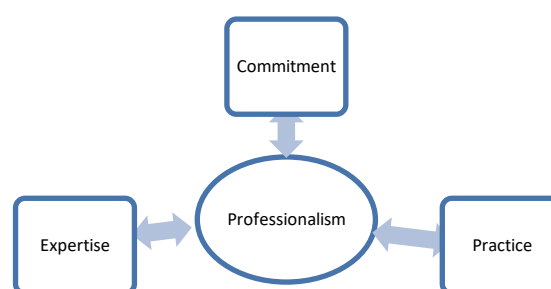
The purpose of this study is to assess the implementation of essential components of the higher diploma programme in the instructional process of educators and to pin key challenges that inhibit respective graduates from applying those features at least to the minimum desired level.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Educationalist

Our stance is that professional teaching and teacher professionalism—as it develops over the time of one's career—require and reflects both expertise and

commitment, and that teacher professionalism only emerges in educational practices. We will come back to those three words: expertise, commitment, and their emergence in practice. As a consequence, teacher development during their work lives not only entails a technical or instrumental dimension (e.g., how can I make things work?) but also a moral dimension (e.g., the inevitability of making value-laden choices, acting on them, and taking responsibility for them). This fundamental ethical commitment in a relationship of care and responsibility, furthermore, does not leave one emotionally indifferent (Filipp, 1990).



Thus, value-laden choices can and will be contested. The discussion on criteria and goals results from the ongoing processes of power, negotiation, and influence, thus reflecting also an essential political dimension. In other words, we agree with Hargreaves's programmatic claim in 1995 that teachers, their work, and

Table 1. Proportion samples and sampling techniques of the study

Sample Type	Population size	Sample size	Percent of the sample taken	Sampling techniques used
Educators, Observation	143	41	28.67%	Lottery sampling ¹
Educators, Questionnaire	143	41	28.67%	Purposive, educators whose classrooms were observed
PSTs ² , questionnaire	3087	1029	33.33%	Purposive and lottery sampling
HDLs ³ moreover, RFPs ⁴ , Interview	6	5	83.33%	Available sampling

their professional development include technical, moral, emotional, and political dimensions that are connected and need to be understood in their interplay. Teachers' lives as situated in particular time-space contexts emerge in and through the enacted practices for which they carry responsibility. The lives are not the same as accountability (Kelchtermans, 2011), and we are fully aware that believers and promoters in performativity policies—be they policy makers or educational researchers—with high-stakes testing and accountability procedures in many countries, will disagree with my stance on teacher professionalism (Kelchtermans, 2007b).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

As the very purpose of this study cannot be addressed by only one of the approaches, a mixed approach is preferred for this study. Hence, a survey research method, with a mixed approach, that incorporates both quantitative (from classroom observation and questionnaire) and qualitative data (from running logs and interview) were accordingly employed in the study.

Sample and Sampling

Teacher educators who have graduated in the programme and have been teaching in all colleges of Oromia Regional State are the target population of this study. Besides, pre-service teachers, higher diploma leaders, and research focal

persons were also part of the study. In this regard, there is twelve colleges of teachers' education found in the region. For the matter of feasibility, however, it was planned to include only one-fourth of the colleges.

For the same reason, colleges found nearer to the capital of the country are given a particular emphasis. Nearer colleges are purposely done to save resources like time and finance. Time is taken as the most influential factors as the researcher had teaching and extra activities load in the college. Hence, Sebeta, Asella, and Fitcha are the sample colleges of the study.

It was strived to at least include 30% of the target population, even though more sample size was involved in some cases. Respective proportion and sampling techniques are addressed as follows for each sample type (See Table 1).

Instruments

Classroom observation

A first hand and authentic information can be obtained through observation regarding the quality of the instructional process. There are five tools which can be used in classroom observation. These are maps, inventories, checklists, rating form,

and running logs. The first three can quickly be developed and employed. The resulting data can also be analyzed quickly. However, the problem is that information gathered from observation can be subjective. Hence, a quantified rating form or rubrics was used to reduce and maintain subjectivity.

This form was systematically adopted from observation forms of the programme and related studies on the primary key components of the programme and the existing situation. Besides, running logs comprising of narrative summaries of ongoing events or actions in the classroom were employed as an additional instrument to obtain intensive information on how the lesson was going on.

It was planned to carry out 106 lesson observations of about 53 educators of which 24 were failed for unwillingness of educators and sudden dropping up of academic schedule for other administrative issues. The educators in this case didn't directly address their unwillingness. At the beginning, they seemed to be willing.

¹ Number of educators in each department of the college was first identified, and one-third proportion of them was computed to determine the number of educators needed to be included in the sample from each department. Finally, lottery sampling was employed to select the computed amount of the teacher from each department..

² PSTs – Pre-service teachers.

³ HDLs – Higher Diploma Leaders (Trainers).

Table 2. Profiles of Educators (Department, Sex and Qualification)

Department	Frequency	Percent	Qualification	Frequency	Percent	Gender	Frequency	Percent
Esthetic	3	7.3	Diploma	3	7.3	Male	38	92.7
Language	8	19.5	First degree	3	7.3	Female	3	7.3
Natural	15	36.6	Second degree	35	85.4	Total	41	100.0
Prof. studies	9	22.0	Total	41	100.0			
Social	6	14.6						
Total	41	100						

However, they were later found to show unwilling characters like dropping the class, changing schedules, deliberately coming to class late and unnoticed. As a result, a classroom of 41 educators was observed twice resulting in a total of 82 lesson observations.

Questionnaire

Issues like qualities of the instructional process, promising progress observed, significant limitations, key challenges, and future recommendations were incorporated in the questionnaire. Two versions of the questionnaire, targeting the same sets of issues, were prepared and administered separately for educators and pre-service teachers.

Interview

A semi-structured interview of open-ended items employed for higher diploma programme leaders and research focal

persons. The interview targets were extracting data on the extent of implementation of the programme, opportunities, and challenges related to implementation of the training. Besides, some new issues found from the classroom observations and questionnaires were incorporated.

Data Analysis

As already addressed, the mixed approach of both qualitative and quantitative methods was employed. Data from the observation and questionnaire was analyzed using quantitative approach through both descriptive and inferential statistics. In order to do so, the respective variables were first identified and defined following the purpose of the study. Some of these variables are dependent while others are independent.

Reflective practice, managing learning and practice of action research are the

Table 3. Summary of educators' and pre-service teachers' rating on the extent of their reflective practice

Tools	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Educators' questionnaire	40	1.85	3.60	2.8575	.40217
Pre-service teachers'	1029	2.35	4.25	3.1615	.54956

dependent variables, which are all ordinal. Educators' qualification, experience, teaching load, and classroom size are the independent variables, which are ordinal in nature; while educators' gender, department, and additional responsibilities are independent variables with simple nature.

For the case of quantitative analysis, descriptive statistics were employed to present a summary of the findings. Besides, inferential analyses like correlation and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were employed to figure out the magnitude and direction of the influence of some selected factors raised as challenges. In this process, the normality of all the respective data has first checked by which desired tests of inferential analysis were identified. On the other hand, data from the interview was mainly analyzed qualitatively to identify and prioritize critical challenges. Moreover, data collected from different sample groups were separately analyzed; triangulation was also carried out to check how the

pieces of evidence obtained from respective groups agree with each other and previous studies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Educators

(See Table 2)

Reflective Practices

One of the major components of the programme is reflective practice. The questionnaire was used to gather data from pre-service teachers and educators themselves. It was found that this is the component, which is being practiced in a relatively better way than the others as the mean score is higher than that of the acceptable level in at least as per the rating of pre-service teachers. In the case of self-evaluation of the educators, the mean is still below the acceptable level (less than three).

Even though the mean value is acceptable, as already addressed, there are some components, which are being poorly or hardly practiced that were presented in

table 4. It can be understood from this table that the level at which particular performance was rated are different according to the educators and pre-service teachers' evaluation. Some of the ratings still contradict with the existing situation found from other tools. The mean value obtained in the case of action research as per the rating of educators (1.60) and pre-service teachers (2.30) implies that there has been of action research. However, it was found from document survey and interview that action research has not been practiced at all in the colleges for the last five years (See Table 4).

Managing Learning

Generally, the mean value of performance of those educators in managing learning, according to the classroom observation, was found to be 2.53. Hence, the overall performance regarding managing learning is below the standard according the observation carried out based on the five-level rubrics (5 stands for accomplished very well/excellent, 4 stands for excellent performance, 3 for acceptable, 2 for below

standard, 1 for poor and 0 stands for task that was not observed in action). However, the mean values of the educators and pre-service teachers rating fall to the acceptable range as it is respectively 3.29 and 3.41 (table 5). This paradox implies that the extent to which learning is being managed seems better according to the self-evaluation of the educators. Again the rating of the pre-service teachers looks like somewhat better than that of the classroom observation. Such deviation could have something to do with the understanding and reflectiveness of the raters.

The classroom observations, for example, were conducted by the researcher (also the leader of the programme) who has a better experience that enables him to see things critically. On the other hand, both educators and pre-service teachers who filled the questionnaires are not as experienced as the researcher. Hence, their rating may not be as critical as desired. Besides, this could also be due to the limitation of educators in being critically reflective.

Table 4. Sub-components of reflective practices being practiced below the standard as per the rating of educators and pre-service teachers

Components	Mean of educators' rating	Mean of pre-service teachers' rating
Conducting collaborative action research to resolve critical problems they came across in their instructional process	1.60	2.30
Examining how their lessons are going and changing their approach and activity whenever they felt what they outlined is not working	2.50	2.20
Inviting colleagues to observe and comment on their lessons	2.60	2.90
Planning every lesson	2.70	1.00
Encourage and let their students to participate in lesson planning and assessment	2.70	.75

Contrary to this, there are also some educators who delivered their lesson (almost) perfectly during the observation but scored below the standard in the pre-service teachers' rating. This score implies that these educators did their best, did things they never did before, only for the matter of observation as the pre-service teachers' rating revealed that they implemented none of it in their instructional process. In this regard, it was found that top scores of classroom observations of two educators contradict with low scores of pre-service teachers' rating on the same sets of components (See Table 5).

Similar contradictions were also found in the following components found as being accomplished very well by educators, with mean values of four (4) while pre-service teachers' rating and classroom observation revealed poor performance.

1. Encouraging and making sure that students actively engaged in every instructional activity.
2. Selecting assessment techniques based on the objectives of our lesson.
3. Asking questions to monitor learning.
4. Waiting sufficient time for students to think of and answer questions in our instructional activities.
5. Listening carefully to students' questions and answers.

Table 5. Summary of performance of educators in managing learning

Instruments	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Observation	41	1.88	4.02	2.5320	.51760
Educators' questionnaire	40	2.52	4.00	3.4192	.33128
Pre-service teachers' questionnaire	1029	2.32	4.44	3.2912	.49984

6. Restating questions and answers whenever it is necessary.
7. Making sure that students received constructive feedback from both the educator and their peers.

Thus, the extent to which learning is managed in the educators' instructional process was found to be not as satisfactory as the desired standard of the programme. From the classroom observations, most importantly, it was found that only in 7.41% of the lessons that learning was managed as good as it is supposed to be. Numbers of key limitations were observed in the remaining 92.59% of the lessons.

Those well-managed lessons are of two types. The first represents well-organized and managed student-centered lessons in which instructional activities were carefully selected, planned on and implemented with better utilization of instructional materials. Jigsaw groups, pyramiding, peer teaching, and presentation was mainly employed in these

lessons. Respective pre-service teachers also used more proportion of time as they carried out the majority of the activities with minimal facilitation roles of instructors. The second type, on the other hand, is incorporated teacher-centered lessons, which were very organized, planned and implemented lessons. Out of the total 82 lessons, only two lessons fall to this category in which not only the pre-service teachers were kept alerted and active throughout, but also all the essential sub-components of managing learning were well accomplished.

Numerous fundamental limitations were diagnosed in the remaining 92.59% of the lessons, which, for the matter of clarity, were organized as follows. The majority, 76.83%, of them are poorly planned, organized and delivered student-centered lessons. It was also clear that the approaches, in these lessons, were suddenly selected right at the beginning or even in the middle of the lessons. In additions, numbers of the critical

components of managing learning were not addressed at all or accomplished poorly. Besides, every task seemed to be artificialized. The following limitations were commonly observed in most of these lessons.

1. The educator gave an activity with an inappropriate organization, materials preparations, and vague instructions. No reasonable and limited time allocation. Suddenly, the activity was dropped and followed by another activity with similar limitations. In some of such lessons, more than six instructional activities were attempted to be used just within 50 minutes.
2. Group discussions of unclear, too general, and inappropriate leading questions were given — no reasonable and limited time allocation. Students were forced to stop their discussion abruptly. Without making sure that all groups stopped their discussion and got ready for the reflection, the reflection was started. However, the majority of pre-service teachers were not even paying due attention. The instructor got disappointed with the accuracy of responses raised by very few representatives, dropped it, explain the sub-topics by him/her and gave another

discussion task. A single activity was used repeatedly, which made the lesson boring at the end of the day.

3. Educator introduced an instructional activity as a pyramiding. However, students were not given reasonable time to read or think of the issue under study individually. They were forced to rush to the pair discussion level. However, some were still thinking individually, some discussing in pair or even being in a group of three, four or five. Then, he/she forced them to jump to the whole group reflection or even dropped everything and started to explain everything him/herself. Within fractions of a minute, the lesson turned in to a state of teacher-centered instructions.

Some (8.54%) of the remaining lessons are just an ordinary teacher-centered lecture with no or very limited students' interaction while the remaining 6.10% of the lessons are inadequately delivered in laboratory or studio - like ICT, Music, Chemistry, Physics, and Biology, which could have been very interactive lessons. In these lessons, the ordinary lecture was commonly employed despite all the availed resource organized and found under a single roof. Rather than showing students

Table 6. Skewness and kurtosis of the respective data sets

Variables	Skewness	Kurtosis
Reflective practice-Educators' rating	-2.63	11.07
Reflective practice-PSTs' rating	.604	-.623
Managing learning-CRO	1.08	1.013
Managing learning-Educators' rating	-3.99	20.33
Managing learning-PSTs rating	.830	.053

the resources, letting them see, feel, examine and investigate it, educators just preferred to deal with everything theoretically.

In addition to the classroom observation, similar limitations were also diagnosed from the questionnaire of the educators and pre-service teachers. The following are limitations on which mean values of two (2) and less were scored as per the self-reflection of the educators and rating of the respective pre-service teachers.

1. Lesson planning (not being practiced at all).
2. Use of varieties of active learning methods.
3. Treating students according to their differences.
4. Presenting an overview of the lesson, lesson objectives to the students and their roles.
5. Providing the opportunity for the group, self- and peer assessment

The Practice of Action Research

From the interview of higher diploma leaders and research focal persons of the colleges, it was found that no action research was conducted to resolve key problems in the last five years. No formal document (research report) was also found in this respect. The findings indicate that few action kinds of research were only conducted for the matter of academic promotion to fulfill the requirement, not to resolve real instructional problems.

Challenges

In the interview, challenges and suggestions were given more emphasis. As a result, numerous challenges found of which some overlap with those obtained from the questionnaire. Hence, the triangulation of the findings of the questionnaire and interview revealed the following potential challenges.

1. Educators' overload (teaching load, advisory, extra-curricular activities, practicum, and emergency meetings).

Table 7. Correlation of educators' performance in reflective practice and managing learning with the teaching load

Variables	N	Mean	SD	rho	p
Managing learning-CRO	41	16.710	3.412	.167	.296
Teaching Load	41	2.512	1.003		
Managing learning-PSTs rating	41	21.722	3.320	-.278	.079
Teaching Load	41	2.5122	1.003		
Reflective practice-PSTs rating	41	9.481	1.647	-.215	.176
Teaching Load	41	2.512	1.003		
Variables	N	Mean	SD	rho	P
Reflective practice-Educators' rating	41	55.756	11.947	-.238	.134
Teaching Load	41	2.512	1.003		
Managing learning- Educators' rating	41	76.730	14.417	-.071	.658
Teaching Load	41	2.512	1.003		

2. Lack of/poor concern of management bodies (follow up, encouragement, support, reinforcement and so on).
3. Lack of support for action research (moral, resources, time and budget)

Having teaching load at the priority, it was attempted to employ inferential statistics to check whether this factor made significant difference or not. The normality of the resulting data sets is, however, needed to be examined first in order to select and employ the right tool. As a result, the data sets of classroom observation and pre-service teachers' rating were found to be approximately normally distributed while that of the educators' ratings failed to meet this assumption (Gupta, 1999: 3-11) (See Table 6).

For this reason, Pearson's correlation was employed for variables with normal distribution while Spearman rho was used for those whose data sets are not normally distributed. As a result, a correlation of teaching load and extent to which the programme is being applied, for example, revealed that there is no significant association as the resulting p-values, as can be figured out from table 7, are all greater than .05 (Foster, 2002: 14; Gupta, 1999: 4-12).

Besides, it was found from the analysis of variance (ANOVA) that there is no significant difference in the extent of managing to learn among educators of different level of teaching load as the resulting value is $F(4, 36) = .773, p = .550$. Since the p-value is greater than .05, the

difference is not statistically significant (Foster, 2002: 14; Gupta, 1999: 4-12).

Table 8. Mean and standard deviation of educators' performance in the level of teaching load

Level of teaching load	Performance		
	N	M	SD
Overloaded (greater than 15 credit hours)	2	2.790	.706
Optimally loaded (13 - 15 credit hours)	22	2.578	.558
Standardly loaded (9 - 12 credit hours)	6	2.315	.527
Less loaded (4 - 8 credit hours)	8	2.397	.524
Under loaded (less than four credit hours)	1	2.860	.
Total	41	2.532	.518

Table 9. Summary of one-way analysis of covariance of educators' performance in the level of teaching load

Variables	Educators' performance in managing learning		
	Between Groups	Within Groups	Total
df	4	36	40
SS	.848	9.868	10.716
MS	.212	.274	
F	.773		
P	.550		

CONCLUSION

The extent to which the programme has been implemented is not as such satisfactory as desired since lesson planning and action research have not been practiced at all in the colleges,

managing learning was found to be below the standard as per the observation (mean = 2.532). Besides, only 7.41% of the lessons were found to be managed to the desired standard. In the remaining 92.59% of the lessons, numerous limitations were diagnosed. What makes these findings interesting is that most limitations identified in this study overlap with that of our pre-service teachers' diagnosed during supervision of independent teaching practice. The limitation implies that our graduating pre-service teachers have been adopting the way educators used to run their instructional process. It means that failing to implement training of the programme in their instructional process appropriately threatens not only learning of the respective pre-service teachers but also their professional competency in their future career.

RECOMMENDATION

Out of twelve colleges found in the region, this study targeted only three. Again, out of the total of 143 educators who were graduated in the programme, only 41 were included. Hence, whatever the finding of the study is, it could not be logical to generalize it. It is believed to be very important to project the extent of the

problem in the existing situation. However, what needed to be recommended first is a further study, which includes number of colleges and the proportion of participants. In this regard, respective researchers and leaders of the programme needed to work collaboratively in planning and carrying such studies.

Similarly, designated stakeholders including management bodies of colleges, education bureau, and the ministry need to be more concerned in supporting and financing such detailed studies. Besides, it is also recommended that non-governmental organizations take the issue as their thematic area, plan and work on assessment and intervention. The funding organization, world bank/GEQIP, needs to strongly consider evaluating the programme in general and making sure that the fund is being accordingly expended appropriately in higher education institutions offering the programme. It is good to consider creating a room for creating and supporting a system in which better practiced will accordingly be appreciated.

Secondly, college management bodies are better to be more concerned in creating and implementing a system by which the extent to which the programme

is being implemented will be followed up, monitored and better practiced will accordingly be appreciated. Providing necessary support is also better to be part of the system. In such a system, reflective practices, like peer collaborative works in lesson planning, classroom observation and lesson evaluation, are needed to be incorporated.

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