

Full Length Research Paper

The current teacher education programs in Ethiopia: Reflection on practice

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This study threw light on the current practice of Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching Program at Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia. The study focused on the enrolment, graduation and attrition proportion of Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching candidates in the year 2011 and 2015. The 2011 and 2015 academic years have been purposively selected because the in-out-in and in-out training modalities were introduced in these academic years respectively. To this end, document analysis and interview were employed as the means of data collection. The enrolment of 427 candidates in 2011 academic year, and 268 candidates in 2015 were considered to view the total number of graduates in the subsequent years. The data collected were analyzed using numbers and percentage for quantitative data, and description was employed for the qualitative data. Finally, it was discovered that the attrition proportion was very high for 2011 and 2015 academic years. For example, the total of 179 candidates (41.92%) graduated from 427 candidates who were enrolled in 2011 academic year. Similarly, in 2015, from the total of 268 candidates, only 118 candidates (44.03) graduated. Consequently, 50.08% and 55.97% of the candidates left the training in 2011 and 2015 academic years respectively. The study also shows that candidates were not interested in the program since most of them joined the program because of lack of any other job opportunities. From the study, further deliberation on the motivation and retention mechanisms of the candidates was implied. Various stakeholders, Ministry of Education, Regional bureaus, universities, etc. need to join their hands so as to further strengthen the current Teacher Education Programs.

Key words: Enrollment, practice, graduation, attrition.

INTRODUCTION

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) took over political power from the military regime 'Derg' in 1991. Soon after overthrowing the regime, the FDRE introduced a new Education and Training Policy (ETP) (The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1994). The policy was introduced in order to expand the

educational infrastructure, access to educational opportunity, and to improve the quality of education (Akbiyik, 2015; Mekasha, 2005).

The policy aimed to achieve four educational goals namely: quality, access, relevance, and equity (The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1994). The

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training of qualified teachers is also part of the expansion of the education system of the Country (Abebe and Woldehanna, 2013; Ministry of Education, 2010b; Semela, 2014). As clearly indicated in the policy, teachers are expected to be equipped with the “ability, diligence, and professional interest, and the physical and mental fitness appropriate for the profession” (The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1994).

Following the Education and Training Policy (1994), the Ministry of Education of Ethiopia initiated Education Sector Development Programs (ESDPs, I-V) to meet the educational goals of the nation (Ministry of Education, 1998, 2002, 2005, 2010a, 2015). The ESDP was introduced with the aim to improve the quality and quantity of Education. In the ESDP, it was made clear that the teacher training system should be increased to provide adequate numbers of qualified teachers to address the demands the Country. The issue of upholding the quality of teachers was also another component of ESDP (Ministry of Education, 2010a, 2015).

A policy program called Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) was issued in 2003 with the intention to develop the objectives and strategies of the teacher's education (Ministry of Education, 2003). As MOE's description depicts, the TESO policy represents a paradigm shift in line with the international trends of active learner-center training (MOE, 2003). TESO was implemented with great hope to improve the quality of teachers, although the desired results have not been achieved (Ahmad, 2014; Kedir, 2006; Ministry of Education, 2003).

Owing to some dissatisfaction in the content competencies of TESO graduates and the TESO curriculum in general, the Ministry of Education of Ethiopia launched a new direction on secondary teacher education training in Ethiopia (Abebe and Woldehanna, 2013; Semela, 2014). The new direction of secondary teacher preparation was put in a place in July 2011, and the new teacher training program which was known as Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT) was implemented by 10 universities in Ethiopia (Kassa and Amdemeskel, 2013; Ministry of Education, 2011).

The main aim of the PGDT program was to fill the content and pedagogical gaps that were remarked in TESO program as observed in teaching and classroom practices in secondary schools (Mekonnen, 2008; Merdassa, 2012; Ministry of Education, 2011). The program requires trainees who completed a three-year BA/BSc program in any subject area such as physics, mathematics, English, etc. and those who are willing to join teaching profession for one-year training as a regular program in teacher education institutes in Ethiopia (Ministry of Education, 2011).

However, the initial designed mode of delivery as the one-year regular session was suddenly changed by Ministry of Education, and a tentative new mode of

delivery was introduced as the country faced a critical shortage of secondary school teachers (Ministry of Education, 2011). The new tentative mode of delivery was in-out-in modality (Merdassa, 2012; Ministry of Education, 2011). Following the new in-out-in modality, the program has been conducted in two summer programs, and one distance program (Geberew and Demoze, 2014; Merdassa, 2012; Ministry of Education, 2011).

In addition to the new in-out-in modality of teaching training, the Ministry of Education introduced the one – year (in-out) regular based training session as of 2015. The training has been conducted on campus for one year and trainees are expected to go through one-month teaching practice after attending the necessary subject area and pedagogy courses (Ministry of Education, 2011).

PGDT trainees' selection criteria

Currently, in Ethiopia, the selection criteria and the training of prospective secondary school teachers has been changed (Deneke et al., 2015). Primarily, those who have graduated from the university with BA/BSc in applied programs will be eligible for the application. Subsequently, those with better cumulative grade point (CGPA), who are willing to join teaching profession and can satisfy the requirement of Ministry of Education will be selected for the teaching profession (Ministry of Education, 2011).

The Ministry of Education of Ethiopia set the criteria of selection: 30% CGPA, 35% entrance exam, 25% interview and 20% high school for those who showed up interest to be secondary school teacher (Akbiyik, 2015; Geberew and Demoze, 2014; Kassa and Amdemeskel, 2013; Ministry of Education, 2011). The criteria were put into practice only for the first round in the year 2011, but recently it was changed, the interview was omitted from the criteria (Kassa and Amdemeskel, 2013).

The researcher's position, working as the Coordinator of Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching Program at College level for 4 years, and working as Associate Dean for undergraduate programs at College of Education and Behavioural Studies inspired him to have a discussion with trainees, and to explore the situation as the member of academia. Hence, this study attempted to reflect on the practice of PGDT program training. The study is believed to highlights the entry stages of the in-out-in modality of 2011, and a one-year modality of 2015 in order to get the broader picture of the trend of training in both modalities at College of Education and Behavioral Studies. The study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the admission, graduation, and attrition trends of PGDT trainees at Addis Ababa University?
2. What are the PGDT trainees' views towards their

profession?

3. What is the implication of the study for teacher education program in Ethiopia?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study site

This study was conducted at one of the higher learning institutions, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia. The population of this study included all the prospective trainees enrolled in Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT) in Addis Ababa University in the year 2011 for in-out-in modality and in the year 2015 of in-out (one-year) modality. The study employed purposive sampling technique as the study is limited to Addis Ababa University and Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching Program. The study considered only the 2011 and 2015 academic years in order to have the general pictures the two modalities had at the commencement stages.

Sampling

There were 427 prospective trainees enrolled in PGDT in Addis Ababa University in summer 2011 in eight fields of studies: Amharic, English, Geography, Civics and Ethical Education, Math, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Physical Education. In 2015 academic year, a total of 268 trainees were enrolled in the University in 8 fields of study such as Amharic, English, Geography, Civics and Ethical education, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Physical Education. For the analysis, all fields which were offered in both modalities have been considered. Hence, all the trainees from the eight field of studies such as Amharic, English, Geography, Civics and Ethical Education, Math, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Physical Education were considered in order to clearly understand the pattern.

Data gathering instrument

A descriptive survey research design with concurrent mixed (qualitative and quantitative) approach has been employed with the intention of getting the general picture of the current teacher training program in the College of Education and Behavioral Studies, Addis Ababa University.

An interview has been held with the trainees 4, and 5 trainees from the Department of Science and Mathematics Education in 2011 and 2015 academic years were interviewed respectively. In the same way, a total of 7 candidates, that is, 3 and 4 trainees from the Department of Social Science and Language Education were interviewed in the year 2011 and 2015 consecutively.

In sum, 16 trainees were interviewed at College of Education and Behavioral Studies, Addis Ababa University. The interview was documented on researcher's diary for the year 2011 and 2015, and an attempt has been made to probe their responses more deeply in order to get latent information related to the teaching profession (Cohen et al., 2011).

The document analysis, that is, registrar records were used to gather the necessary information on the enrollment and graduation of the target groups, and hence, the lists of trainees who enrolled and graduated from the two departments, the only departments in the college have been collected.

Data analysis

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative analytical procedures

have been used for the analysis. Descriptive statistics, frequency and percentage have been employed to analyze the quantitative data while the data obtained through interviews have been organized and narrated by using descriptive statements. The analysis and discussion of both quantitative and qualitative data have been combined together for the better understanding of the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hitherto, it was mentioned that an attempt has been made to explore the practice of current teacher education programs: in-out-in modality, and in-out modality at the College of Education and Behavioral Studies, Addis Ababa University. The study reflected on only the 2011 and 2015 academic years of the two modalities at the commencement stage in order to view the general trend of the program. The analysis of the two academic years has been presented consecutively as shown in Table 1.

As presented in Table 1, the number of graduates in physics, maths, chemistry and biology is very small. Sadly, from 73 enrolled trainees, only 15 (20.5%) graduated from the physics field, followed by mathematics, 35.6%. A significant number of trainees (83.3%) graduated from the physical education field. When students quit their training, some of them got their clearance from the college. The researcher got the opportunity to interview them when they visited his office to get his signature and stamp for their clearance form. For the question, *why do you quit your training?* Most of them replied that they got a job opportunity. Interestingly, the reasons they wrote on their clearance form were different. They wrote different reasons: *health problem, family problem, diversity visa (DV) lottery, economic reasons, and personal problem*. In fact, what they wrote was totally different from the actual reasons, that is, securing the better job opportunity.

The researcher further asked them, *why they wrote those reasons against their factual reasons for quitting their training*. They replied, if they want to continue their training in the future, they can easily get justification for the reasons they wrote on their clearance form than getting the better job as the reasons for quitting the program. In fact, only the Physical Education graduates who replied they could not easily find a job in other sectors than teaching. If they want to search for a better salary, the only chance they have is to look for a better job in private schools. So, the whole story shows the challenges confronting teaching profession (Table 2).

As compared to the Science and Mathematics Education graduates (Table 1), the number of graduates from Social Science and Language Education is higher, even if, it is not better. As can be further inferred from Table 2, only Geography field has an outsized number of graduates. From the total 28 enrolled trainees, 22 of them, which constitutes 78.57% graduated from Geography field of studies. Other fields, Amharic, English, and Civics and Ethical Education, are relatively

Table 1. Enrolled and graduated trainees in the field of Science and Mathematics Education in the year 2011.

S/N	Field of the study	Total number of enrolled trainees	Total number of graduated trainees	Percentage
1	Biology	44	17	38.64
2	Chemistry	46	14	30.43
3	Maths	45	16	35.6
4	Physics	73	15	20.5
5	Physical education	36	30	83.3
Total		244	92	37.71

Source: Registrar office and Office for the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs, College of Education and Behavioural Studies.

Table 2. Enrolled and graduated trainees in the field of social science and language education in the year 2011.

S/N	Field of the study	Total number of enrolled trainees	Total number of graduated trainees	Percentage
1	Amharic	37	17	45.95
2	English	42	17	40.48
3	Civics and ethical education	76	31	40.79
4	Geography	28	22	78.57
Total		183	87	47.54

Source: Registrar office and Office for the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs, College of Education and Behavioural Studies.

Table 3. Enrolled and graduated trainees in the field of science and mathematics education, and social science language education in the year 2011.

S/N	Field of the study	Total number of enrolled trainees	Total number of graduated trainees	Percentage
1	Science and mathematics education	244	92	37.71
2	Social science and language education	183	87	47.54
Total		427	179	41.92

Source: Registrar office and office for the associate dean for undergraduate programs, college of education and behavioural studies.

on a similar proportion of graduates, that is 45.95, 40.48 and 40.79% respectively. From the interview, different reasons obtained for quitting their training such as *getting a teaching job in private school with a better salary, transfer to another university, which is near to their home village, further education (pursuing MA studies), getting a better job in other sectors, lack of support, and receiving the scholarship*. These were the major reasons they exclaimed for leaving the training. In general, a significant number of trainees left their training aside in the year 2011 academic year (Table 3).

As can be clearly seen from Table 3, from 183 enrolled trainees, only 47.54% (N=87) graduated from the Social Science and Language Education field of studies. In the same way, 37.71% (N=92) graduates of Science and Mathematics Education field quit the training. In the journey of training, one can imagine the resources devoted to realizing the current training program. This

particular case, if things are going to continue per se, schools may be left empty, which in turn have negative consequences on the quality of secondary schools' students who are expected to join the universities to challenge globalization and play as key actors in the knowledge-based economy in the future. Hence, a wide range of research at the national level needs to be encouraged to view this particular case study further (Table 4).

As it could be inferred from Table 4, the total of 120 trainees was enrolled in four fields such as Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, and Physics, and each with 30 trainees, and Physical education field with 29 trainees. However, only 50% (N=15), 60% (N=18), 53.33% (N=16), 50% (N=15), and 72.41% (N=21) of the trainees from Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics, and Physical Education were respectively graduated from the University. A large number of trainees (72.41%)

Table 4. Enrolled and graduated trainees in the field of science and mathematics education in the year 2015.

S/N	Field of the study	Total number of enrolled trainees	Total number of graduated trainees	Percentage
1	Biology	30	15	50.00
2	Chemistry	30	18	60.00
3	Maths	30	16	53.33
4	Physics	30	15	50.00
5	Physical education	29	21	72.41
Total		149	85	57.05

Source: Registrar office and Office for the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs, College of Education and Behavioural Studies.

Table 5. Enrolled and graduated trainees in the field of social science and language education in the year 2015.

S/N	Field of the study	Total number of enrolled trainees	Total number of graduated trainees	Percentage
1	Amharic	29	15	51.72
2	English	30	5	16.67
3	Civics and ethical education	30	5	16.67
4	Geography	30	8	26.67
Total		119	33	27.73

Source: Registrar office and Office for the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs, College of Education and Behavioural Studies.

Table 6. Enrolled and graduated trainees in the field of science and mathematics education, and social science language education in the year 2015.

S/N	Field of the study	Total number of enrolled trainees	Total number of graduated trainees	Percentage
1	Science and mathematics education	149	85	57.05
2	Social science and language education	119	33	27.73
Total		268	118	44.03

Source: Registrar office and Office for the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs, College of Education and Behavioural Studies.

graduated from Physical Education field of studies. In total, only 57.05% (85) of trainees graduated from the total number of 149 students who were enrolled at the University with the attrition percentage of almost 43% (Table 5).

The result in Table 5 shows that almost similar number of trainees were enrolled in the fields of Social Science and Language Education areas such as Amharic (29), English (30) Civics and ethical education (30), Geography (30). Among these, only 15 (51.72%), 5 (16.67%), 5 (16.16%), and 8 (26.67%) trainees from Amharic, English, Civics and Ethical Education, and Geography fields respectively graduated from 119 enrolled trainees. In general, only 33 (27.73) trainees graduated from the total of 119 trainees who got admission. Hence, the attrition rate is almost 72.27%. So, one can possibly understand the resources wastage in

running the program and the challenges ahead of the Education Sector in producing qualified secondary school teachers. This scenario is left open for further research, discussion and deliberation among different stakeholders (Table 6).

As indicated in Table 6, out of 149 trainees, 85 trainees, which constitute for 57.05% graduated from Science and Mathematics Education field, and only 27.73% (33) trainees graduated from the Department of Social Science and Language Education. As can be further inferred from the Table 6, attrition percentage is very high in the field of Social Science and Language Education as compared to the Science and Mathematics Education field of studies. From the interview, some of the Social Science and Language Education graduates explained that they have more job opportunities than those who graduated from the Science and Mathematics

fields.

In fact, the enrollment proportion of Social Science and Language Education field is lower than that of science at the national level. This can further take us to the change of education policy, 70:30 that is, 70% catering for science and technology students whereas 30% for humanities and social sciences (Ministry of Education, 2010a). This shows the policy change has opened more job opportunities for the Social Science and Language Education graduates as their number is small compared to science graduates. The figures in Table 6 also justify the trend. The situation can also be a more exciting area of research which needs to be further approached in the future. From the interview with the question “*Why did you join teaching profession?*” One of the interviewees explained his reasons as:

“What else can I join? I have been searching for a job in my field of study almost for one year; I couldn’t find the job. Finally, I joined this profession even if my preference is working in my field of study.” Interviewed on May 14, 2015.

Another interviewee on the same day responded:

“I didn’t think of teaching in my life but.... sorry teacher, no options at all.”

As can be seen from the interviewee's responses, teaching is perceived as the least preferred profession and sometimes considered as a bridge for the search of better job opportunities. As the current education program requires at least having BA/BSC degree in the subject area, those who join the program can easily leave the profession as soon as they find the best options. As Table 6 reveals, many students quitted their training soon after they found a job in other non-teaching sectors. No system of retentions was put in place at the time of the new teaching modality implementation.

In connection to this, for the question, *will you leave teaching profession if you are paid high salary?* The same interviewees said “yes.” They expressed that *“nowadays, teaching is the most demanding task, especially at the high school level. High school students don’t have the interest to learn, and they are misbehaving too much.”* Many trainees bitterly complained about the behavior of high school students, particularly when these trainees were sent to high school for one-month teaching practice. The researcher further interviewed the trainees on their first experience of one-month teaching experience. They were asked:

What makes your teaching practice more difficult during your one-month teaching practice? One of the interviewees from English field of study replied:

You know, I did not have teaching experience before. I

just attended pedagogy courses this year. It is a demanding profession. Some may think, teaching is an easy task, but for me, if I have to teach seriously, I felt so many gaps like skills of teaching, getting student attention, engaging students in their task, giving feedback to what student ask in the classroom, organizing the students and so on. I personally believe that one has to love the profession before she/he joins it. For me, teaching is terrible, and I can not continue with this job. No no no! I really sympathize with my high school teachers for their long year of services in this profession. Interviewed May 13, 2015

The other interviewee from Biology field responded as follow:

I know teaching is a demanding profession. I love it! I believe teaching is the foundation of every profession, whatever you call it: medicine, accounting, engineering, architecture, etc., they are all results of teaching. In most cases, this makes me happy, and I love the profession. It does not imply that it is not a difficult task. As a beginner, I perceive teaching as for how a bicycle rider begins to practice riding. When you watch as an outsider, it looks easy but when you are given to ride you feel it, and you ask for help. So, riding a bike is not an easy task, sometimes you need help, sometimes you fall down, sometimes you hit people and so on. You need to practice again and again until you feel like a good rider. So, this is the way I perceive teaching, if it is from the bottom of our heart, we will be good riders of the profession regardless of all the challenges in front of us. So, I love teaching and will grow in teaching and die with teaching. This is my feeling. Interviewed May 13, 2015

As we can understand from the responses of the aforementioned interviewees, trainees’ interest is very important either to stay or leave the profession. Even if, it is difficult to get people internal feelings and attitudes, sometimes getting discussion and holding an interview with applicant particularly, during the selection process can possibly help the institution to recruit better trainees with a positive attitude towards the profession. From the aforementioned interview, the second interviewee has even scored best mark in her field of study when compared to her classmates, and her explanations were reliable.

In general, the trainees expressed different opinions regarding the program; the majority were not interested in the program while others were in favor of the program. In connection to this idea, Deneke et al. (2015) also agreed that the current teacher education modality had affected the trainee's interest toward the program. He further argued that “There is a lack of coordination among the stakeholders; the number of courses that trainees are required to take and the given time to complete the training is not proportional; in return, all these challenges

made the training boring to meet the trainees' needs and expectations. This scenario can adversely affect the trainees teaching profession and quality of education at large" (Deneke et al., 2015). Hence, encouragement and proper orientation are implied soon after the admission of the trainees in their respective programs.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

Looking at the admission and graduation of trainees at the entry phase of the two modalities, in-out-in of 2011, and in-out of the 2015 academic year, several candidates quitted their training. Candidates were not interested in the program because most of them joined the program because they had no any other job opportunity. This shows that trainees are not intrinsically motivated to join the teaching profession though a few trainee love their profession.

Sadly, the attrition trend is very high in both 2011 and 2015 academic year, that is, 50.08 and 55.97% of the candidates left the training in 2011 and 2015 academic years respectively, and this needs serious attention. In an in-out-in teaching modality, it was not easy for the trainees to be immersed in the actual teaching practice right from the beginning. They were shouldering the full responsibility of instruction before they prepare themselves at least psychologically. As teaching is a complex career, it is evident that the trainees could be in a state of confusion and stress at the commencement stage of teaching practice. They need to be provided strong professional support, and hence there should be a strong partnership among secondary schools, regional education bureau and near university or teacher training institution.

Hence, the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders need to promote teaching profession and encourage intrinsically motivated trainees during the selection process. In addition, encouragement and proper orientation need be carried out before the selection process in order to influence the trainees to value teaching profession and attend the training properly, though naturally resources can be limited. The Ministry of Education should urge the Regional Education Bureaus to select, recruit and send their trainees to universities as per the set guidelines. The selection and admission criteria should also be respected.

From the study, further discussion on the motivation and retention mechanisms of the trainees is implied. So, various stakeholders, Ministry of education, Regional bureaus, universities, etc. need to join their hands to open further dialogue on how to strengthen the current Teacher Education Programs straightaway. In general, rethinking the program is implied from the finding of this research.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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