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## **A Historical Analysis of English Language Teacher Preparation in Ethiopia: Challenges and Possible Intervention Models**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this article is to provide a more comprehensive picture of English language teacher preparation in Ethiopia on top of a closer analysis of current English language teacher education program. In particular, it presents English language teacher education within the context of policy implementation and teacher preparation models over the last six decades by highlighting key reforms and how these reforms impacted the English language teacher preparation system. Different studies currently reveal that teacher preparation in Ethiopia in general and English language teacher preparation in particular is entangled with multiple problems. Hence, this article critically investigates major challenges of the current English language teachers' preparation program of Ethiopia and recommends possible intervention model which helps to curb the problem.

**Keywords:** ELT teacher preparation, models.

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### **Introduction**

Modern education in Ethiopia was started in 1908 with the opening of Minlik II secondary school in Addis Ababa. The aim was the need to cope up with western ideas and modernization (Aweke 2015). However curriculum records prior to the 1940s are either nonexistent or they are difficult to access. The period before the introduction of modern education (around 1908) is entirely characterized by religion-based education where there was no English. The period between the introduction of modern education (around 1908) and the Italian occupation (1928) was characterized by religion-based education (mainly) and modern education (with a little English, French, etc.).

In this short article an attempt is made to analyze the historical background of English language teacher preparation across different periods in Ethiopia. Further the teacher education models employed during the periods are reviewed, the prone and cones of the programs are discussed and recommendations for the future scenario are made accordingly.

### **English Language Teacher Preparation in Ethiopia: Historical Analysis**

The Imperial era: 1944–1974

The Imperial period is a remarkable period in the history of English language education in Ethiopia. According to Tamene (in IIE briefing paper 2012), the 1947/8 English curriculum is believed to be the earliest book-form curriculum document in the history of the country. The opening statement of this curriculum for teaching English in Ethiopia contains the following rationale:

- Foreign teachers all speak English.
- Textbooks are available in all subjects in English.
- The first step toward professions is to pass an examination. The examination referred to was probably that of the University of London (General Certificate of Education).
- Further reading can be done in English.

Generally the teaching of English during this period can be characterized by the following points. Grammar-based teaching and the audio-lingual approach were dominating the curriculum. The language teaching syllabus mainly consisted of word lists and grammar items graded across grade levels. Grammar was the starting point in planning language courses. The curriculum specified the grammar and vocabulary learners needed to master. Simplified Readers were recommended for use at different levels including the elementary level. English had the highest periods in the school curriculum.

The challenge of the time was evident that elementary school English teachers had limited English language competence. There was no specialized training to teach English at different levels of education. Almost all secondary school English teachers were expatriates from different countries. Many of the expatriate teachers did not have appropriate training to teach English. There were no teaching materials that reflected the local culture. English was used to serve as a medium of instruction in the early years of the development of school curriculum in the country Tamene (in IIR briefing paper 2012).

English language teacher preparation in Ethiopia started in early 1970s with the opening of three diploma-offering teacher colleges. These include: Kotebe College of Teacher Education (in Addis Ababa), Bahirdar Academy of Pedagogy (currently known as Bahirdar University), and Alemeya College of Agriculture (now known as Haramaya University) (Kelemu in Tesfaye, 2013). Later on English language teacher training was commenced at degree level in Hailesilase

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I University (currently known as Addis Ababa University). The training was conducted by expatriate teacher trainers and all curricular materials were imported from Great Britain. The behaviorist paradigm of what Wallace (1991) refers as Applied Science Model was the framework of the training. Structural approach and audio ligula methods were the dominant teaching methods of the time; trainees were expected to develop their knowledge of the English language by analyzing its system and memorizing dozen of lists of words in English. The training aimed at improving the trainees' content knowledge and their English language proficiency. Little attention was given for English language teaching courses Rodgers (1955). The program was suffering from quality problem since the teachers didn't get training on how to teach the language and many expatriate teachers were teaching English for the only reason that they were native speakers of the language. To overcome this problem the ministry hired foreign advisors to conducted a survey and recommend solutions for the issue. In his recommendation report for the Imperial Ministry of Education, Wingard (the lead advisor in Jarvis 1969) stated that:

*“All teacher-training programs should stress English, English-teaching method and English speech. In-service teacher education program: should do the same. A ‘method’ specially designed for teaching English to Ethiopians should be developed”* (Wingard in Jarvis 1969; 44).

### **The Military regime: 1974–1991**

The 1974 popular revolution was a phenomenon that changed the country forever. Like any other social change, it was obvious that the revolution would be accompanied by educational reforms because it was an outcome of conflict and bloodshed (Tesfaye 2013). The regime departed government from religion.

Some reforms were made on the teacher education system during this period, for example, courses on general teaching methodology and educational psychology were included in the curriculum. Local curricular materials and local teacher trainers were also became part of the program.

*Between 1954 and 1973, Grammar-based and audio-lingual methods became dominant. English was taught in schools beginning in the third grade, and the language started to establish itself in all subjects. Over the next few decades, however, English began to decline gradually due to the Dergue regime's emphasis on the mother tongue, and the fact that English was considered the “language of capitalists.” From 1974-1990, a new series of textbooks that reflected socialist ideology, English for the New Ethiopia, was published (IIE, briefing paper 2012:18).*

The teacher education program consisted of teaching practice with 3 credit hour weight which was detached in time and space from the main program and was regarded as less important than mainly theoretical courses in aspects of linguistics, literature and pedagogical courses. Student teachers in such programs had to wait before they could put into practice the thing they were learning. Wallace's (1991) Applied Science Model seem to be the principle behind this type of course design according to which the student teacher is expected to learn given theories derived from research and study and then take this knowledge into the classroom to apply it in practice. (Mulugeta 2009). This program was also experienced serious quality problem. Challenged by the alarming situation of the time regarding quality education, the Commission for Higher Education (CHF) conducted a study on the state of teachers' education and training (Kelemu, 2000, MoE, 2008). As expected, the findings revealed that the teacher preparation programmers were entangled with complex sets of problems ranging from inadequacy of courses for professional/pedagogical preparation and practice teaching.

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### **The EPRDF-led government: 1991 to present**

The overthrow of the communist regime in 1991 gave way to the new Education and Training Policy (FDRE, 1994). As indicated in the Education and Training Policy document of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE, 1994), the previous curriculum design and instructional processes suffered from old and traditional approach. To overcome this problem, the ministry of education called for complete Teacher Education System overhaul (TESO), which produced a framework detailing five strategies to address the problem in the education system of Ethiopia and enhance the quality of teacher preparation (MoE 2008). One of the strategies in the paradigm shift in the teacher education program requires the presence of learning opportunities characterizing a constructivist paradigm.

TESO program has proposed a change in teacher education focusing mainly on professional courses with extended practicum experience in a reflective approach incorporating portfolio completion, action research and strong partnership between teacher education institutions and school and on academic area courses ( combination of content and method) characterized by active learning student centered instruction, cooperative learning and continuous assessment.

However the TESO program couldn't walk longer distance. It was seriously criticized for marginalizing 'content knowledge' in its teacher education program component (via reducing the credit weight allocated for major fields of study down to 25% of the total credits required to graduate) while demanding too much from upper primary teacher candidates by requiring them to specialize in three different subject-matter areas (Mekonnen, 2008). These practices are considered to be the major contributors to the inadequacies of teachers in all components: subject-matter content, professional knowledge, and practical skills. Under the circumstances, it is evident that the graduates within the TESO program faced considerable difficulties in planning instruction, managing classrooms, and diagnosing students' learning needs (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond et al., 2000).

After six years of actual implementation, in its report the ministry of education expressed the failure of TESO in terms of teachers' 'poor' attributes inadequate subject-matter knowledge, failure to apply/implement student-centered/active learning methods, lack of interest to follow up and support students, low career commitment, and weak partnership/relationship of teachers with school leadership, parents, and the community at large (MoE, 2008). Then the BED pre-service teacher education program was banned from the regular university academic curriculum and replaced by Post-graduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT) program.

The intended objective of PGDT was to equip trainees with the knowledge and skills needed, to become reflective practitioners, to develop understanding of the nature of teacher profession, to provide teacher trainees with theoretical and practical experience, and so forth. On top of this, a framework was prepared for admission criteria to the Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT) based on the research result conducted by ministry of education.

The selection and admission criteria to be considered are: B.Sc or B.A in areas related to secondary school subjects, interview and entrance examination, and teaching profession ethical standards. Now days for pre-school and primary level teachers are trained separately. Even in primary teachers training there is an integrated school curriculum (for grades 1-4) and for the linear subjects being taught in the upper primary (grades 5-8). For both pre-school and primary school requires teachers graduated with diploma from college (10+3) in teaching. From 2011 onward a new system of secondary teacher preparation called Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT) was implemented by 10 universities in Ethiopia. Under this system, the teacher trainees are given one year of professional and practical training before they were employed in a mainstream teaching job (Eyasu ,etal 2017).

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### **Challenges in the current English Language Teacher Education Practice of Ethiopia**

According to some local research findings, the current English language education program is suffering from quality problems (Abiy 2017, Mulugeta 2009, Tesfaye 2013, Geremew 2017). The challenges noted by these findings range from policy issues to classroom practices.

#### **Policy related challenges**

In Ethiopia, primary school teachers are prepared in Colleges of Teacher Education (CTE) while secondary school teachers are prepared in universities. Although there are different selection criteria, the major requirement to be admitted to a CTE is completion of grade 10 with a score of 2.00 on the grade 10 national examination. Students who meet the grade requirement for university preparation will be promoted to grade 11. Most of those enrolled in CTEs are therefore students who could not gain entrance to university preparation programs. In the university teacher education program was banned after the collapse of TESSO and replaced by a one year PGDT program. To be enrolled in the PGDT program, students first need to have an applied degree in their respective subject areas. The PEGDT program is a one year short program which was ambitiously designed by the ministry of education to prepare secondary school teachers. The program has quite number of limitations as noted by scholars. To mention few: the graduates who undergo the consecutive (add-on) modality do not get enough time and opportunity to assimilate their pedagogical training and to develop a sense of reflective professionalism. When the new education road map document explains the limitations of the PGDT (add-on) program with regard to trainees' motivation, it notes that:

*In relation to the PGDT, mostly those first degree graduates who are unable to get jobs decide to become secondary/preparatory teachers as a temporary solution. It is therefore not surprising that a widespread lack of interest and motivation prevails among trainees of secondary education. An extreme case in point is a situation where trainees "... enter into class by force or warning letters" (ERM 2018:36).*

#### **Challenges with Beliefs and Perceptions of Teacher Educators and Teacher Trainees**

Most teacher educators have inappropriate belief, perceptions and attitude about the constructivist paradigm of reflective practitioner model and its application which the policy dictates. The teachers (as well as their students) still view the teaching/learning process as the act of a teacher transmitting knowledge to the students, rather than the students discovering and constructing their own knowledge through participatory learning activities (Zerihun, Beishuizen, & Van Os, 2011). The reality is that instructors (teacher educators) have few classroom and technological resources for their own professional development and instruction; therefore, they continue to train teachers with applied sciences model (and are primarily using) teacher-centered, non-participatory pedagogy (Frost & Little, 2014; Teshome, 2012). Hence the graduates are found to be deficient all in language proficiency, content knowledge and pedagogical competence.

#### **Challenges in Language Proficiency of Teachers and Students**

There is general agreement that the standard of English is low among both students and teachers in Ethiopia (Esheti, 2010; Negash, 2006). The 2010 Educational Statistical Abstract showed that only 25.9% achieved over 50% in the final year school English test (MoE, 2010). Poor use of English is often passed from teachers to students (Cohen, 2007, p.71), and some lecturers in higher levels of education have poor mastery of the language (Esheti, 2010). A part from this, it is often observed that English language proficiency is one of the challenges to Ethiopian students to be successful in their academics. In addition, Haregewoin (2008) underscores that as the English language proficiency of high school students is below the expectation, it is difficult to communicate with them in class though the medium of the level is English. The reviews also

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observed that the problem is extended to the teachers in different since they also suffer from poor proficiency of English language.

### **Reflective Model: As a way forward to curb the Challenges**

In Ethiopia, as indicated in the new Education and Training Policy document, the previous curriculum design and instructional processes suffered from old and traditional approach and therefore the current curriculum calls for shift from the behaviorist paradigm of applied science model which focuses on teacher and teaching to the constructivist paradigm of reflective practitioner model that focuses on learner and learning (ETP, 1994, ICDR, 1998). In order to produce higher-quality and better prepared teachers through rigorous training and practical experiences, the system called for instruction to focus on constructivist student teacher learning approaches rather than traditional passive learning methodologies (Teshome, 2012, Mekonnen 2008).

### **The Rationale to Employ Reflective Practitioner Teacher Education Model**

Reflective practice is a meditative process of learning a language, and it provides the response to an event. It enables teachers or trainees to assert their professional identity as change agents with moral purposes and it is essential to self-knowledge. It is a problem solving activity and involves a critique of practice, the values that are implicit in that practice, the personal, social, institutional and broad policy contexts in which practice takes place, and the implications of these for improvement of that practice. It is an essential means of reexamination and renewal of passion by those who care about their work, who are captivated by their pupils' potential for learning (Day and Conklin, 1992).

Reflective practice seeks to offer a dynamic, reliable, and viable means by which the teacher can develop his or her professionalism because it is teacher-initiated and teacher-directed: it involves teachers observing themselves, collecting data about their own classrooms and their roles within them, and using the data as a basis for self-evaluation and change and their professional growth (Richards and Lockhart, 1994).

Through reflection, a teacher becomes better able to justify and explain educational actions to self and others. Reflection aids educators in speaking about their practice in a confident and informed manner. The ways of developing reflection are daily journal or teacher's diary, cross disciplinary sharing, observation, recording lesson and student feedback. Reading the reflections of others aid in self-realization. By reading the reflections of others, it always helps teachers in self-improvement. It also prevents repetition of the same mistake.

Pandey (2007) has found that language teachers have positive attitudes towards reflective practices though they are not trained in reflective practice formally. He recommended that all the in-service teachers should be provided training in reflective practice and the teacher's training courses should include reflective model to some extent. He has also recommended that teacher support group should be managed within a school and among schools to share their opinions about their own strengths and weaknesses between colleagues and to attend in reflective conversation. .

Similarly, Phuyal (2008) on his research on, "a study on teacher development through reflective teaching: perceptions and practices of English language teachers" found a very deplorable condition of the use of reflective practice in English language teachers' situation. He found them not practicing the tool of reflective teaching as a means of their professional development. They were found having various constraints to implement the tools of reflection in English classrooms as a way to their professional development.

The reflective theory supports planning, action and reflection. Research on effective teaching over the past two decades has shown that reflective practice is linked to inquiry, reflection, and

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continuous professional growth. Reflective practice can be a beneficial form of professional development at both the pre-service and in-service levels of teaching. By gaining a better understanding of their own individual teaching styles through reflective practice, teachers can improve their effectiveness in the classroom. In this fast changing global scenario, therefore, no other processes except for reflective practice, could serve the ever growing needs of the English language learners and teachers by integrating both theory and practice (Bartlett, 1990).

### **Opportunities to Implement Reflective Practitioner Model In Ethiopia**

#### **The Policy Framework**

As discussed in the aforementioned part of this article, the education and training policy of the country (Ethiopia) dictates that instructions and trainings should be delivered under the framework of the constructivist paradigm of reflective practitioner model. Therefore there is conducive policy framework for the implementation of reflective practitioner model.

#### **Practicum and Action Research Traditions**

There are many successful techniques for employing reflective practices in pre-service teacher education programs. Practicum and action research practices are the most important ones among others (Mulugeta 2008). These activities are part and parcel of the current teacher education curricula of the country.

#### **The CPD Platform**

There is a CPD activity for teachers at all levels of schooling in Ethiopia though the organization and the naming are different. This can be taken as an opportunity especially for teacher educators. Providing professional development to teacher educators which includes hands-on cooperative learning opportunities to build academic content knowledge in the context of research-based practices enables those teacher educators to engage in participatory teaching and learning techniques, increase their understanding of reflective practices (Mayer, & Kahle, 2000).

### **Conclusion**

The introduction of English into the education system of Ethiopia has now counted more than a century. Over this long period, the teaching and learning of English had been experiencing several reforms and changes for the provision of quality education. Studies, however, indicate that the quality of English language education still remains to be unsolved challenge of the country's education system.

As we learn from the history of modern education in Ethiopia, the practice of English language teaching and English language teacher preparation had never been out of challenges throughout. For example, during the imperial era, English language was in its infant stage and was struggling with limitations related to input (teaching and training materials), process (the methodology and training modality) and the quality of trainers and teachers. The English language teacher preparation was conducted through the applied science model that demands trainers impart knowledge to the trainees. According to the findings of the survey conducted by the Imperial Ministry of Education and oversea advisors on quality of English language education, it was concluded that the training model had its own share for the poor performance of English language teachers of the time. Besides, by the time of the Military Regime (Dergu), some improvements had been made in to English language education and teacher preparation programs in terms of course design and materials preparation. Nevertheless, the training model had continued to be applied science model and the system remained with the usual quality problem. Furthermore, in 1994 the new transitional government Ethiopia declared new

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education and training policy which in the belief to curb the quality problem that the education program in general and English language education in particular had been entangled with. The reform called for paradigm shift in the education system from the behaviorist view of teacher and teaching to the constructivist paradigm of learner and learning. New teacher preparation program referred as Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) was introduced to the system. TESO and all the subsequent programs after TESO propose that the constructive paradigm of reflective practitioner model should be the principle model of teacher preparation in Ethiopia. However, as contemporary studies disclose teacher preparation in Ethiopia in general and ELT preparation in particular could not detach itself from the applied science model where trainees' role is merely listening to teachers' lectures and explanations. There are different opportunities in the country's education systems that help to implement the reflective practitioner model and improve the quality of English language education. The opportunities include the policy framework and professional development platforms. Therefore it is worth to look into these opportunities and apply the reflective practitioner model of teacher preparation and ensure quality English language education in the country.

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