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## HAWASSA UNIVERSITY

"EDUCATION IS THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON WHICH YOU CAN USE TO CHANGE THE WORLD."
NELSON MANDELA

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## Original Article

# Exploring the implementation of higher diploma professional training program at Madda Walabu University: perceptions and practices

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higher diploma program;
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## Abstract

*The concept of professional development is significant in the learning community. This study's main objective was to find out how Madda Walabu University teacher educators felt about HDP training. University teacher educators who took part in the program in the years 2022 the study's participants. The most often used data collection techniques in this qualitative case study were interviews and observations. After two training sessions were observed, six teacher educators, two HDIs (Higher Diploma Leaders), one HDT (Higher Diploma Tutor), and one HDP Coordinator were interviewed. The qualitative data was presented systematically. The study findings revealed that the program's forced nature dampened participants' enthusiasm, and a variety of disappointing and dissatisfying situations, such as the competence of instructors and leaders and the lengthened schedule, stifled their efforts to get the most out of the program. Furthermore, several activities in the program were shown to encourage deception, and there appeared to be a schism among participants regarding the importance of school placement. Despite the setbacks, participants eventually recognized the importance of the program in the majority of its components. In general, the HDP is perceived by trainee teachers as bureaucratic, decontextualized, lack active learning and engagement and viewed solely as a professional development program that provides information. As a result, researchers recommend that the training module shall be reviewed and emphasize on technology-enhanced pedagogies, teachers' ethical perspectives and commitments, as well as assess its impact on the teaching/learning process.*

## 1 Introduction

Teaching profession, like every other field in the twenty-first century is rapidly changing. It has evolved into a field with a variety of viewpoints. These viewpoints typically stem from a concern about how new teachers can best be mentored, taught, and trained in obtaining the skills necessary to offer high-quality educational experiences for their pupils. The current wave of change has centered on how to handle the complexities, ambiguities, and uncertainties of teachers' work and learning to teach (Kane, 2002) in order to improve school teaching quality In this manner, Avalos (2002) argues that teacher education should shift away from simply training teachers to administer a curriculum and

generate specific learning outcomes, and instead focus on fostering an understanding of the larger social and cultural context in which teachers work.

Teacher education programs should strive to educate instructors who are able to analyze evidence using the reasoning processes and critical approaches approved by the discipline (Long and Reigle, 2002). As a result, if a country wants to increase the quality of its education, it should first focus on increasing teachers' teaching competence through various professional development courses. Teachers' demand for professional development should be considered by educationists and material writers who are trying to improve the quality of education at various levels.

It also appears that neither initial training nor prior teaching experiences are sufficient to ensure that teacher educators are effective in their teaching. Weimer (1990) argued by saying teachers are seasoned; they may not remember or comprehend the process of becoming a teacher. This indicates that teachers should participate in higher diploma program in order to improve their teaching skills to improve the quality of their students' learning. Furthermore, teaching is a difficult and time-consuming career. To deal with it effectively, teachers must continue to develop their profession in order to become effective professionals who fight to prevent professional atrophy and increase educational quality.

The Ministry of Education formed a task force to investigate the causes of the problem and offer strategies to solve it in order to increase educational quality and accomplish the targeted educational goals. The study's findings emphasized urgent need for TPD training programs, both short and long term (Ministry of Education, 2019).

The Higher Diploma Program (HDP) was established in October 2003 in response to the recommendations to satisfy the recognized needs of teacher educators and to assist the implementation of the TESO program as part of ongoing professional development activities (Ministry of Education, 2004). The curriculum could be viewed as an important aspect of professionalization for all current teacher educators, with the goal of improving educational quality by giving them with the necessary tools. HDP's main goals are to provide teacher educators with the knowledge and skills they need to demonstrate adequate awareness of higher education environments, teaching strategies and assessment techniques as well as changing trends and needs in order to improve academic programs, engage in various teacher development activities, active learning methods, continuous assessment, and action research. The purpose of this study was to explore perception and practice of HDP training at Madda Walabu University in 2021/22 as one of the professional development programs designed for teacher educators.

## 2 Research Problem

Professional development provides a great deal of personal satisfaction and allows teachers to attain greater levels of expertise if it is pursued over time with like-minded colleagues who can provide mutual support and critical companionship (Pollard, 2005). Similarly, (Villegas-Reimers, 2003) claims that professional development experiences have a substantial impact on teachers' performance, both in and out of the classroom, which is especially important given that a large proportion of teachers around the world are under-prepared for their profession.

The HDP, which is founded on the principle of reflective practice, is expected to make significant improvements in Ethiopian teacher education. It offers a practical program to promote teacher educators' growth as successful teachers and reflective practitioners with expanded professional status, capable of modeling active learning and continuous evaluation, managing change, and making a difference in the educational system

(Ministry of Education, 2018a). The research, on the other hand, raises concerns about how such professional development courses are delivered and the attitudes of people involved, which may have an impact on the achievement of the goals. For example, according to Robinson (2002), course-based professional development approaches may be too academic, lack practical application in the classroom, be dependent on the provider's preferences, and overlook instructors' expertise. Guskey (1988) also states that, while many professional development programs for university instructors aimed to improve practice, they appeared to have little influence and were not well received by the faculty members who took part. This suggests that even well-organized programs may not be well-received by participants, resulting in little impact on their subsequent performance.

According to the researcher's observations, there is disparity between what is anticipated of teacher educators as a result of HDP training and their actual practices. For instance, at Madda Walabu University, thirty-six trainees were dropped out of the training and thirty-four instructors dropped out. That means in the two consecutive years seventy instructors couldn't complete the training at Madda Walabu University Regarding this, many teacher educators complained that the contents of HDP are repetitive and unrealistic in real-world classrooms. They also noted that the HDP training is comparable to their pre-service training. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the perception and practice of HDP training at Madda Walabu University in 2022.

To attain the objective, the following research questions were raised.

1. How do teacher educators perceive the HDP at Madda Walabu University?
2. How do teacher educators practice the components of HDP at Madda Walabu University?
3. What are the major factors that make instructors to dropout from attending the HDP program at Madda Walabu University?

## 2.1 Objectives

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions and practices of HDP trainees at Madda Walabu University. This helps:

1. To examine teacher educators' perceptions of the Higher Diploma Program.
2. To analyze teacher educator's the practice of the components/facets of HDP.
3. To explore the reasons why instructors dropout from HDP program?

## 2.2 Significance

The findings of this study will have the following significance and provide deep insight to:

higher Diploma leaders, tutors, coordinators and the university community at large to have clear understanding about HDP suggest to HDP modular developers, practitioners, officials and researchers to have a clear view on HDP implementation process to make possible improvements. help to contribute to existing literature regarding HDP implementation

### 2.3 Delimitation

The study was delimited to Madda Walabu University in Ethiopia, and its primary objective was to explore teacher educators' perceptions and practices of HDP training implementation.

## 3 Literature review

This section reviews different source on the implementation of HDP program practices and perception of the trainees

### 3.1 The need for HDP

The professional development of teacher educators is an aspect of Professional development that has been neglected despite many reports that show its importance in the improvement of the development of all teachers. In fact, research involving teacher educators is scarce, and little, if any, attention has been paid to their Professional development (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). The same author asserts that

In higher education institutions, teacher-educators and other educators' professional growth is similar to that of elementary and high school teachers. In addition to subject area expertise, teachers in higher education typically lack pedagogical knowledge. They also need to learn teaching strategies skill, attitudes, and ethical principles that guide teaching (Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

In a similar vein, Wayson (1984) contends that the advice is exactly the same for initiatives that would train educators to train educators. It teaches an: Those who educate teachers must demonstrate professional perspicacity in order to earn it. The transition from a more technical, "menu" approach, including single-session seminars, activities, and strategies that concentrate on general skill development, is one of the most fundamental changes in how appropriate professional development for teachers is conceptualized. Professional development is instead viewed as a complex and intellectual orientation that calls for new goals, roles and pedagogical practices.

Professional development enables teachers to develop the skills and expertise needed to assist students to function as independent thinkers and creative learners both inside the school and in society at large. Professional development is also necessary to broaden instructors' knowledge and skills, which are necessary to help students successfully acquire and grasp curricular content standards and to create effective schools.

Craft (2004) claims that in recent years, professional growth has drawn more and more attention. Teachers need to expand their abilities through professional development because of the rapid change, high requirements, and appeals for better quality.

When it comes to their subject area, various teaching philosophies, and assessment methods, TPD programs that contain HDP can assist teacher educators in adjusting to changes and innovations over time. Being inventive and enhancing the standard of instruction and student learning are also beneficial.

Teaching is a difficult job that necessitates professional judgment in situations where there are no right answers. On the one hand, there are teachers who strictly adhere to

predetermined routines based on tradition, habit, institutional standards, and expectations (Ministry of Education, 2004). As a result, professional development programs for teacher educators, such as the HDP, are critical to enhancing teacher educators' professional competence and improving educational quality.

Many countries, such as Norway, the United Kingdom, and Sri Lanka, have made decisions about the requirement of pedagogical training for university professors (Gibbs and Coffey, 2004). Many universities in Finland set out pedagogical training for their faculty members, but training is not compulsory. To develop teachers' pedagogical thinking and skills, the University of Helsinki, for instance, underlines the need for every new teacher to have the opportunity to take part in an introduction seminar on university teaching (University of Helsinki, 2003). However, the training is voluntary.

HDP began in 2003 as a consequence of study recommendations made by a task force convened by the Ministry of Education to improve educational quality and accomplish desired outcomes. The study's findings and recommendations for action noted that TPD training programs, both short and long-term, are critical. As a result, HDP was recommended as one of the programs to satisfy the identified needs of teacher educators and to assist the execution of the TESO program as part of teacher educators' ongoing professional development. As a result, the HDP's main goals are for candidates to identify their needs and become professional, reflective teachers who demonstrate high professional ethics, demonstrate adequate awareness of higher education environments, including evolving changes and needs to improve academic programs, develop teaching skills based on sound theoretical knowledge and experience, serve as a role model for effective teaching, and contribute to institutional and community decentralization (Ministry of Education, 2018b).

## 3.2 The Implementation of HDP

In many educational contexts and at the policy level, the importance of professional development in raising educational quality is acknowledged. In order to raise the caliber of instruction, this program also recognizes the relevance of professional standards and related accreditation for instructors (Ministry of Education, 1994; UNESCO, 2005). Successful professional development opportunities have a discernible effect on teachers' work, both inside and outside of the classroom, especially in light of the fact that a sizable portion of teachers are unprepared for their profession (Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

Rowe and Hill (1998) comes to the conclusion that the most important take away from the research on educational effectiveness is that good teachers and their professional development do make a difference, and that what students experience on a daily basis in interaction with teachers and other students in classrooms rather than what they bring with them is really what matters. Cohen and Hill (2000) study is another that demonstrates the substantial correlation between raising student accomplishment levels and bettering teachers' practices (1997). This study found that teachers who took part in ongoing curriculum-based professional development reported changes in their teaching methods, which were then linked to noticeably higher student accomplishment scores on state exams. Regardless of the scale of the change, there is a mutually beneficial relationship between educational reform and teachers' professional development. Reforms in education that exclude teachers and their professional growth have not proven effective. Initiatives for professional development that have not been integrated into a reform of institutions and policies have also been unsuccessful. A significant change is rarely brought about by changing teachers while also altering contexts, beliefs, and structures. On the other hand, professional development opportunities and experiences that are not incorporated into some form of major reform of organizations' structures,

policies, and practices have not been successful. Reforms like this are typical worldwide (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

HDP as one of the professional development programs offers a great deal of personal fulfillment and enables teacher educators to build higher levels of expertise if it is implemented properly in line with its specified objectives.

The HDP candidates will work together as a group and will be supported by HDL who have already completed the HDP. The group is in charge of coming up with new ideas, keeping discussions on track, making mutual teaching observations, offering peer support and feedback, and presenting research findings. The implementation of the course relies heavily on active participatory learning.

The HDP is a one-year program that includes regular observation, feedback, placement, action research, and professional meetings with the HDL and tutors. The teacher educators must complete a number of training package projects demonstrating how their work for the diploma influenced their own instructional techniques. Reflection on their classroom practices and research projects should lead to ongoing and lasting improvements in their teaching throughout the year. The trainees carryout their teaching commitments and at the same time complete the HDP. Most of the works of teacher educators in the HDP is based on their own teaching and other professional activities.

Continuous assessment contributes to complete the portfolio of evidence which is the beginning of continuous professional development plan for teacher educators who complete the program (Ministry of Education, 2011).

From this, one can understand that the practice of the HDP requires reflection on practices, continuous and self-assessments, devotions and commitments of both the teacher educators, HDL and tutors to improve their practices.

## 3.3 Teacher educators' attitudes towards HDP

Teachers' attitudes are the foundation for acting positively or negatively toward people, ideas, or events in the environment. And the majority of educators believe that teachers' attitudes are critical aspects of the teaching process.

The attitude of instructors toward suggested curriculum changes is critical to the success of any innovation. Students who have teachers that have a good attitude toward education and the material perform well in school. Teachers' attitudes are a very important aspect of the teaching process, according to Keynes (1986), Cooper (1986), and Chalan (1988). Teachers' attitudes toward the subject taught are one of the most commonly studied teacher characteristics, according to Keynes (1986), Cooper (1986), and Chalan (1988).

No matter how well-developed a curriculum is and how much support is provided, no matter how much motivation is applied through the accountability of a national assessment scheme, no matter how much politicians exhort, teaching will never improve beyond adequate unless teachers have a good enthusiasm for the subject and methods with their students (Wool, 1994). Similarly, L. Anderson (2004) remarked that regardless of what is done in terms of providing new materials or producing new curricula, educational efficacy is determined by teachers' attitudes and teaching and class management methods.

As a result, it is possible to deduce from the above ideas of scholars that having a good curriculum or a college degree in any way does not guarantee that teacher educators

will be effective in their teaching unless and until they have a positive attitude toward the subjects, new programs, and teaching methods. Negative attitudes can harm the entire teaching process, including topic selection, methodologies, activity planning, and evaluation procedures, among other things. The ability to achieve the desired learning outcomes can be demonstrated by a teacher educator with a positive attitude and the appropriate theoretical and technical knowhow.

## 3.4 Components of HDP

### *3.4.1 Conceptualizing reflection*

Reflection in teaching and learning is defined as analyzing one's practice, finding lessons from it, and determining how those lessons influence future action, or engaging in a deliberate, planned, structured activity to link theory and practice, according to scholars. In a nutshell, reflection is concerned with learning, growth, and change (Ministry of Education, 2018a).

Reflective teaching is an inquiry-based approach to learning that emphasizes a caring ethic, a constructivist teaching approach, and creative problem solving. An ethic of compassion recognizes and values all people's diverse qualities and abilities, regardless of cultural, intellectual, or gender disparities. Teachers who use a constructivist approach place a strong emphasis on concepts, students' questions, active learning, and cooperative learning, as well as integrating evaluation into their lessons. A constructivist method aims to link theory and practice, and sees the student as a "Thinker, inventor, and constructor".

Reflective teaching necessitates the development of reflective activities that enable practitioners to experience and evaluate their actions by verbalizing, thinking, or writing about them. It also enables individuals to get the most out of the autonomous, ongoing, and lifelong production of meaning from their work experiences.

Reflective teaching aids in the development and preservation of professional knowledge. Teacher educators' labor is constant due to the multifaceted nature of educational topics and the practical needs of classroom teaching. This means that teacher educators must keep up with evolving educational concerns in general and the practical needs of classroom instruction in particular.

Donald Schon, a well-known expert in the field of reflective practice, has established components or levels of reflection. Knowing-in-action, reflection-in-action, and reflection on-action are the three types (Schön, 1987).

Reflection in action is reflecting on what we are doing. It is thinking on our feet. It is making decisions events in the classroom as they happen. Reflection on action is reflecting on an action already completed. It is retrospective thinking or thinking after the event. It is like thinking about one's teaching after the class. Reflection for action is reflecting for our future action. It is thinking about the future event. It is proactive thinking to guide future action.

Teacher educators can use reflective teaching to make good and principled decisions. Teachers who are confident and competent in their teaching must reflect systematically and methodically on evidence collected from their activities. The evidence-based nature of reflective teaching and learning follows.

In conclusion, reflective teaching is critical in assisting teacher educators in increasing their chances of taking informed actions (actions based on assumptions that have been

carefully and critically investigated), developing rationale for practice, sharing experience with colleagues, constructing meaning from experience, changing theoretical knowledge into practice, and developing evidence-based decisions in their career, all of which contribute to their professional development.

### *3.4.2 Developing active learning*

"Learning activities that, instead of imparting knowledge to students, engage students in a continuous, collaborative process of constructing and reshaping understanding as a natural result of their experiences and interactions with the world in real ways," described Grabinger (1996) environments. According to Breslow (1999), active learning occurs when students are engaged in some form of directed activity in class, rather than simply sitting and listening to the instructor give a lecture or watching him/her work on a problem on the board. Active learning teachers, he continued, feel that the greatest way to gain information is to instruct pupils, not just with them, but also with one another and with the topic being taught. Students must participate in higher order weighing tasks such as analysis, synthesis, and assessment to be actively involved; they must be mentally and motivationally engaged in a task; and they must have a clear responsibility and an effective role (Bonwell and Eison, 1991). In this context, active learning strategies can be defined as instructional activities that involve students in doing things and thinking about what they are doing (Bonwell and Eison, 1991), and can include a variety of activities, such as having students discuss a problem or a concept with one another during class to having them work on semester-long design projects in groups (Breslow, 1999); cooperative learning, debates, drama, role playing and simulation, and peer tutoring (Bonwell and Eison, 1991).

The necessity for active learning in the classroom stems from constructivism, a theory of knowing (ICDR, 1999). A constructivist epistemology assumes that knowledge is created or made meaningful by the learner's engagement with the environment around him or her (Leu, 1998 cited in ICDR, 1999). Because the universe is not perceived as being made up of permanent facts, it promotes analysis and interpretation rather than memorization. Instead, all knowledge is viewed as being fairly unstable, depending on the observer's or learner's interpretation (ICDR, 1999; Knowles, 1998). As a result, it is assumed that learning is an active process of constructing rather than receiving knowledge, and that education is a process of assisting rather than communicating that construction (Duffy and Cunningham, 1996).

Active learning that develops from such an epistemology, according to research, plays a crucial part in the teaching/learning process (Smylie et al., 1999; Breslow, 1999; Bonwell and Eison, 1991; Orlich et al., 2001). Because the learner is at the center of thought, Smylie et al. (1999) discovered that an active learning attitude toward one's teaching aids in recognizing and solving the challenges teachers confront. He concluded that without such a perspective, teaching becomes essentially a technical undertaking, focused on instructor behaviors rather than student experiences and outcomes. Spring et al. study cited in Breslow (1999) of the effect of active learning on achievement, persistence, and attitudes among undergraduates at the University of Wisconsin found that students who learned through active learning methods had higher achievement, stayed in class longer, and had a more positive attitude toward their courses than students who were taught using traditional methods. Furthermore, a research reported in Grabinger (1996) by Stoiber (1991) revealed that active learning practices in teacher education programs are more effective than traditional instruction in generating reflective instructors.

Other studies have demonstrated that active learning strategies are superior in encouraging the development of students' thinking and writing skills (Bonwell and Eison, 1991),

and that they address a variety of learning styles because active learning necessitates the employment of a variety of learning strategies (Orlich et al., 2001).

In Ethiopia, Amenu (2005) discovered that the magnitude of practicing active learning in Ethiopian HEIs is low, despite teacher educators observing that they have established good attitudes toward active learning instructional approaches.

Generally, the assumptions and importance of active learning is summarized (ICDR, 1999) as follows:

Teaching is effective only when students are learning Learning is effective only when it is meaningful to students. Learning becomes meaningful when students can use it, connect it to their lives or actively participate in it. Active learning encourages students to use higher order thinking skills and move away from the extensive use of lower order thinking skills. It encourages students to communicate effectively about what they are doing and what they are learning. It prepares students to solve problems and to use information from their environment and other sources to make a better life for themselves, their families and their communities.

### *3.4.3 Continuous assessment*

One of the components of HDP is continuous assessment. The program calls for continuous assessment.

Continuous assessment is defined as "an assessment approach that should depict the full range of sources and methods teachers use to gather, interpret, and synthesize information about learners; information that is used to help teachers understand their learners, plan and monitor instruction, and establish a viable classroom culture," according to Airasian (1999) cited in Alausa (2000). According to Puhl (1997), this type of assessment aims to bring about a paradigm shift in educational evaluation in numerous ways. He identified the movement of assessment from a judging to a developmental role as the primary aspect of this transition. Continuous assessment, in this sense, entails the use of a range of assessment tools to examine many aspects of learning, including not just the thinking process but also behaviors and personality traits, throughout a period of time (Alausa, 2000).

Continuous assessment, from an instructional standpoint, recognizes that changing the instructional process requires changing the assessment process (Puhl, 1997). According to Puhl (1997), the concept of continuous assessment has a lot of potential for instructors because it promotes higher-order, creative, and critical thinking, as well as encompasses not only cognitive but also affective and behavioral results. He goes on to say that continuous evaluation gives students greater control over their own learning and transforms the work that teachers undertake, reducing instructional drudgery and increasing professional happiness. In a similar vein, Livingstone (2001) claims that with the deployment of continuous assessment, the teacher is able to monitor, identify, and take note of learning as it occurs as well as behavior as it expresses itself. Above all, Puhl (1997) claims that a continuous assessment strategy can help to address the issue of mismatches between tests and classroom activities, and that when assessment is integrated into the instructional process, test takers' bewilderment and irritation are decreased.

### *3.4.4 Action research*

The other component of HDP is action research, which is critical for improving teacher educators' practices.

Action research is becoming more well-known as a method for empowering practitioners to take charge of their own lives and environments. It is a term that refers to a practical manner of examining one's own work to ensure that it is as desired. Practitioner-based research is a term used to describe action research that is carried out by practitioners. It is sometimes referred to as a form of reflective practices because it involves thinking about and reflecting on practice (Eastern Mennonite University, 2007).

Action research, according to Robson (2002), is a method of bringing about change in the teaching-learning process by incorporating learners in the investigative process. It can also be defined as a research, reflection, and problem-solving process aimed at improving teaching-learning. Purposefulness, introspection, adaptability, practitioner empowerment, and commitment to teaching-learning are all characteristics of action research. Participatory research, collaborative inquiry, action learning, contextual research, school-based research, self-reflective inquiry, teacher research, and practitioner inquiry are all terms used to describe action research.

As a result, it is clear that the primary motivation for engaging teacher educators in action research is to help them improve their practices. Conducting action research specifically helps teacher educators in:

examine their own practice and see whether it lives up to their own expectations of themselves in their teaching; establish a systematic evaluation procedure and identify the criteria, or standards that they and others are using to judge the quality of what they are doing.

In summary, support for professional development through action research builds on a model of learning where practitioners are challenged and helped to find new ways of doing things directed toward s improving practices.

### *3.4.5 Placement in educational institutions*

School placement is one of the components of HDP which is helpful for the professional development of teacher educators.

Teachers in higher education must collaborate with schools or organizations to integrate the mostly theoretical instruction that universities provide with practical application in the workplace. Teachers benefit from this type of involvement because it allows them to fill in gaps in their understanding of the workplace as it relates to their subject areas and to discover community issues. Students can also learn practical skills and acceptable professional values in their subject of study through school or organizational placement (Ministry of Education, 2018a). As a result, school placement is critical for teacher educators to share their knowledge.

From the above reviews HDP is essential in order to improve the quality of education in the country and making efforts to cope with the current technological advancements. This could help to fill in the gap and develop the professional competency of teacher educators.

## 4 Research methods

## 4.1 Research design

This study aimed the perceptions and practices of university instructors about the Higher Diploma Program (HDP) at Madda Walabu University. To achieve this, a qualitative case study design was employed as it is believed to enable the researcher to collect and interpret meaningful human actions and interpretations that people give of themselves or others (Creswell, 2018). Besides, qualitative case study helps to analyze cases in their temporal and local particularity, and starting from people's expressions and activities in their local contexts (Flick, 2002) by which this study was dressed.

The study was based on a specific situation, namely, a program (Higher Diploma Program for Teacher Educators). The goal of the program, according to the HDP Handbook, is to improve the quality of education in Ethiopia by developing the abilities and professionalism of teacher educators through a licensing program. It was created to offer teacher educators a practical program to support their development as effective teachers and reflective practitioners with enhanced professional status, capable of modeling active learning and continuous assessment, managing change, and making a difference in the educational system.

According to the Handbook, the program is a new mandatory qualification for all teacher educators, and it consists of four 4-hour timetabled sessions per week stretched out over a year, for a total of 128 hours of learning to finish the four modules. Completing a list of activities is required to complete the program successfully:

Ten reflective activities showing development of reflective thinking and its effect on practice Two course plans, one per semester Two session plans (excluding Projects and the School Placement) showing development of active learning and assessment techniques Records of 4 formal session observations of the candidate by the HDL or HDT Managing Learning Project School/ Organization Placement Report Action Research Project Continuing Professional Development Plans All End of Module Self Assessments and the Final Self-Assessment

Thus, Higher Diploma being the general case, the specific issues that are addressed within this case are:

Perceptions of the program and its constituents that include active learning, continuous assessment, reflection, action research and school/Organization placement. The practice of these components during their training in the classrooms Reasons why some candidates stopped attending the program

## 4.2 Sources of data and subjects

The data for this study include both primary and secondary sources. With regard to the secondary sources, documents such as the individuals' portfolios and attendance were consulted. Interview and Observation were used as methods of primary data collection. The participants of this study were teacher educators who attended HDP training in 2022, HDP leaders. HDP tutors and HDP Coordinator. Individuals Portfolios for practicing HDP and attendance were used to make the data more reliable and to fill the gap.

## 4.3 Data collection Tools

In-depth interview and observation were used to collect relevant data.

### *4.3.1 Interviews*

An interview schedule was prepared. In-depth interview was conducted with ten participants selected purposively based on their experience and attendance in the program. Six teacher educator (trainees) two HDL, one HDT and one HDP Coordinator participated in the interview. Before starting the interview, the respondents were informed about the purpose of the study. Moreover, for the purpose of ethical consideration, they were informed and given consent that no harm would come to them because of their participation in the study. On top of this, they were informed that they would remain antonyms in the presentation and discussion of the results of the study.

During interviews, all responses were recorded using hand written notes. Finally, the responses of the interviewees were qualitatively analyzed using thematic approach and incorporated in the final report.

### *4.3.2 Observation*

The focus of the observation was on HDP candidates' practices of the training using checklist. During the training the two-module training were observed two times. During observations, notes were taken on important incidents of each observed session. The notes were rewritten after each observation descriptively to substantiate the interview analysis. The descriptions were discussed with each observed participant and after their confirmation

## 4.4 Ethical Considerations

Consent from the respondents was secured through a clearance letter from Institute of Review Board of Madda Walabu University and open discussion with them before starting the study. All of them have shown their agreement and thus, participated willingly. Their anonymity as well as their responses was kept confidential and responses were used for research purposes.

## 4.5 Method data analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is the process of making sense of, sifting, cataloging and selecting themes (Holliday, 2002; Yin, 1989). This process was undertaken at a number of different levels. The first step was to create individual case studies for each participant, which presented a detailed portrait of them. The key objective at this level was to provide meaning to the raw data gathered through interviews, observation, and other methods. The data was then organized into patterns/themes in the second stage. Some patterns were anticipated in advance based on research objectives; however, it was possible that a new pattern would emerge during analysis. Patterns can be known in advance, extracted from research questions, and used as a template for analysis, as Stake (1995) pointed out. As a result, the corpus data was categorized by patterns: HDP perceptions, HDP practices, and reasons for withdrawal.

A comprehensive analysis was used in the third stage to generate themes under each pattern and across the data. This required a thorough comparison study and interpretation, which included sorting and sifting confirming and disconfirming material. A method of triangulation is a deliberate search for confirming and disconfirming evidence from the corpus data (Stake, 1995). At this level, every attempt was made to connect the various

components in a cluster and demonstrate how one piece of data became an example of a larger subject.

# 5 Results and Discussion

In this section the results of the data analysis are presented. For case analysis, G. Anderson (1998) proposed a broad qualitative research approach that organizes the data into descriptive themes. Data was analyzed descriptively using transcribed interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The information was grouped and matched based on the themes and patterns that emerged during the research.

The analysis and interpretation of data is presented under four main headings: perceptions of the program; practice of the facets; reasons for withdrawal. These headings came out from the basic questions that were sought to be answered. Each major heading consists of a number of themes which describe the case that was studied.

## 5.1 Perceptions of the program

In this part are presented participants' perceptions of HDP. Specifically, it describes existing perceptions of the educators on HDP programs implementation

### *5.1.1 Zest reduced by must*

The fact that HDP was imposed as a government mandate has been a source of contention. The majority of participants enrolled in the program since it is a system-wide and mandatory requirement. This has had a negative impact on their learning and participation. They cooperate only to stay on track, which they regard as a "must." Such conception of the program has affected their zest and enthusiasm during the sessions. R1 noted this:

I was forced to attend HDP against my will, and I was uninterested in several of the sessions. I began to actively contribute after I recognized some importance in the contents.

Almost every interviewee, including R1, claims that their interest in the course grew as the semester progressed. However, they initially saw HDP as something that was forced upon them, and their enthusiasm for the sessions was low. Participants have a strong tendency to lose interest in a course or training if they do not feel responsible. Adult learners' intellectual aspirations are least likely to be awakened by severe, uncompromising requirements of authoritative, conventionalized learning programs, according to Knowles (1998). Smylie et al. (1999) further noted that professional development activities have been viewed as grossly inadequate and have been labeled as a waste of time, a joke, and a slum of education. This is because, they explained, they have been imposed rather than owned and treated as a special add on event rather than a part of a natural process. R2 view also reflected:

Our willingness to participate in HDP was not based on our interest. We were not consulted. It's the university's choice. They simply design and offer whatever they want. So what's the big deal about HDP?

You can see how the participant feels about the program. In this way, HDP is seen as something that is imposed upon them. Few could anticipate participants' passion and

enjoyment to be great if the do not identify with the program, that is, if they do not have a sense of ownership for it. This might be due to a lack of awareness, in which participants were not sufficiently oriented to the importance of HDP and pushed it away. The professional perspective on education emphasizes the uncertainty of teaching and calls for high levels of enthusiasm and zeal from teachers. The top-down imposition of change, on the other hand, is incompatible with professionalism and has dampened the enthusiasm of teacher educators.

### *5.1.2 Effort undermined by disappointment*

The time allocated for HDP is the source of dissatisfaction. For a year, HDP is scheduled for two two-hour sessions per week (128 hours). The participants were unyielding that it was an excessive amount of time. They argue that it should have taken two or three months to plan. R3, for instance, argued:

... the program should not have been offered for such a long time. It is possible to condense the major points such that they can be covered in two or three months while remaining interesting.

As they attended more and more sessions, daydreaming and boredom were big issues for the participants. This was owing to the program's lengthy duration and the content's repetitious nature. R4 commented:

...the program was disjointed and disorganized. On the one hand, no orientation was provided prior to the commencement of the program, which would have increased our awareness. On the other side, we were getting tired of the sessions, especially as the year progressed, because we had been doing the same things all year. As a result, I believe the time should be reduced.

The participants couldn't help attending longer sessions with repetitive contents. The majority of interviewees agreed that HDP should have been available for shorter periods of time. They had found it tough to attend it enthusiastically due to their one-year timetable. Furthermore, mundane and typical activities did not pique their interest. Such incidents have harmed their efforts to get the most out of the program in one way or another.

Secondly, participants were disappointed by the partiality of leaders and tutors. Discussions during learning were highly dominated by a few participants. R5 reported:

... the tutors and leaders usually ask and give chances to those who came from the College of Education. They have pedagogical backgrounds and because of that they took the lion's share in the discussions. And because of the domination, we usually surrender to them and our participation was minimal

This feeling of being dominated was difficult for them to overcome, and together with boredom, worsened their participation. As R6 pointed out.

Because tutors lack confidence, they ask instructors of pedagogy for every issue raised. This has created partiality. Therefore, I believe that tutors should be trained well and should preferably come from Education Department.

The interviewees' lack of confidence and frequent references to a few participants "who had background information" are linked to their incompetence, as previously stated. Participants mistrusted the tutors because of their combination of flaws. Tutors may have viewed those participants as resource persons, but giving them more opportunities has

instilled in others a sense of inferiority, which has had a negative impact on the program's conduct.

### *5.1.3 Activities encouraging dishonesty*

The nature of the exercises and the tutors' insistence on doing whatever they were taught caused participants to be dishonest. The parts on lesson planning, reflection, and module assessment at the end of each segment are repetitious and often unnecessary, thus participants were obliged to respond even if they didn't want to. R4 described:

... reflective activities reflective activities produce liars. We were forced to write when we had nothing to reflect in those wide boxes. Because it is a must, we were trying something which was not related with our practice and thought.

According to the program, it must be adaptable to the circumstances in which it is delivered (Ministry of Education, 2018a). The teachers and leaders, on the other hand, were so rigid that the participants' responses were dishonest. This means that educators and leaders demanded quantity above quality and content were redundant and didn't allow trainees for discussion and reflection. The majority of the times, individuals were writing because they felt obliged to do so. R5 attested to the inflexibility as:

In reflective activities and module assessment parts, there are wide boxes. We were forced to fill all in the boxes. If we write what we feel but the box is not full, we are considered as if we did nothing. Therefore, we were writing what we didn't feel, merely to fulfill our duties.

Rather than engaging in actual learning, the participants were adjusting to the tutors' and activities' characteristics. The inflexibility of the program in general, as well as the rigidity of the tutors and leaders, contributed to this. Furthermore, there appeared to be a lack of follow-up and ongoing learning monitoring on the part of leaders and tutors, which contributed to dishonesty. A typical example of this is the report of school placement R7, for instance, commented:

... We were attached to schools in order to gain school experience. I didn't understand the point because I'd been there for a long time. So I only went for two days, and my report on the school experience was written at home rather than on the spot.

HDP includes a school placement so that teacher educators can gain experience in the school for which they are preparing teachers. Despite this, the lack of well-organized placement and follow-up made attaining the objectives difficult and instead fostered dishonesty.

All of this suggests that the learning experiences chosen, the leadership's advice, and the program's rigidity fostered dishonesty because it was the only way out for the participants.

### *5.1.4 Disparity in valuing school placement*

There is a variation in participants' perceptions of the importance of school placement or placement in other organization, owing to differences in prior experience. While many who had taught in secondary schools for many years dismiss the importance of school placement, those who had never had the experience attest to its importance. They claim that they were aware of how schools operate and how they should be placed, but that

the placement did not take this into account. R7, who taught in secondary schools for six years, commented:

... I have sufficient school practice experience and exposure. Observing school practices for a month is thus a waste of time. For me, I got nothing out of my school placement.

R5 also noted:

... I was familiar with the schools and was perplexed as to why I had been assigned to them. I only stayed for two days and wrote the report from the comfort of my own home. I didn't think it added anything to my ability to handle lessons better.

These two extracts imply that participants believe school placement will be of little help to them merely because they are familiar with school practices from previous years. Nonetheless, the goal of school placement is to allow school teachers and teacher educators to exchange their experiences and build school-university cooperation that would allow both sides to continue their professional growth. The idea that educational practice are dynamic and that school teachers profit from the placement is undervalued. Such cases were not appropriately oriented, indicating a lack of school placement organization.

The latter group, however, attested to the value of school placement. They contend that they gained a lot from their experience in the school. As R8 noted:

...the school placement allowed me to pay close attention to the surroundings. Prospective graduates who may join the school in the future benefit from knowledge of the school environment, which helps to prepare them for the problems they will face. It also enabled me to learn from the school's senior staff of the school.

R9 also pointed out:

Despite some issues with the manner in which it was handled, it made me think about how schools work. I wondered if that was the case in the high school where I had attended. I was startled to learn that high schools are overlooked, and I witnessed a complete breakdown in their operations.

I understand from these participants' responses that they valued the school placement's aims in that it allows them to share their experiences with schoolteachers. Nonetheless, the methods used to attain the goals were ineffective due to a lack of coordination and follow-up.

As a result, the gap can be interpreted as people having significantly divergent perspectives on school placement. The level to which they value it is determined by their previous experiences. Participants who had previously taught in schools regarded it with suspicion, while those who had never taught before acknowledged to its usefulness.

### *5.1.5 Dramatic eventuality: perceiving the relevance*

Despite the program's flaws, participants' perceptions of education and knowledge appear to have been significantly influenced in a good way. The importance of the various aspects of HDP, particularly active learning, continuous assessment, and action research, is eventually recognized by participants. Not only did they show appreciation, but the importance of the various aspects of HDP, particularly active learning, continuous assessment, and action research, is eventually recognized by participants. They believe that they

have learned alternative teaching and assessment approaches. What they overlooked was the manner in which the program was delivered. For instance, R3, said:

...I think it has changed the way I had been thinking about teaching a lot. The fundamental realization for me was that teaching should only be considered in relation to learning. When you are teaching, unless you are constantly monitoring that learning, and trying to address what you understand from that in practice of your teaching, then it really becomes sort of teaching that you really don't care.

As far as I can tell, the participant believes that the best way to learn about pupils is to start with what they think. This suggests that participants begin to think of instruction as facilitating learning rather than as knowledge transfer. I considered it a really dramatic effect of the curriculum because they themselves indicated a change in ideas of the teaching/learning process. The learning process was fraught with problems, but it eventually had an impact on the minds of the participants. Another participant, R10, noted:

HDP enabled me the opportunity to learn about various active learning strategies and to refresh my mind so that I could put my theoretical knowledge into practice in the classroom whenever possible.

You may appreciate the participant's skepticism about putting the skills he learned into practice, even though he recognizes that his knowledge of the approaches has grown. To put it another way, participants' knowledge grew and their perspectives shifted, but the door to practice did not appear to be opened. R9 expressed his hesitation regarding the practice:

... It's actually an attempt to deconstruct the typical teaching method that we've grown accustomed to. It encourages instructors to participate in a variety of activity-based preparations for students' learning and assessment of their work. As a result of the numerous restraints, instructors are obliged to work under extreme duress.

As a result, I believe that the participants recognized the importance of HDP, despite being disappointed by the process's flaws, and remain committed to the practice. In the next piece, we'll look at why they're so adamant about practicing the facets despite their understanding of their importance. But, at this point, all I can say is that the end result is spectacular and astounding, because a program that was highly bureaucratized and plagued by problems has at least influenced participants' preconceived notions.

## 5.2 The practice of candidates to the components of HDP

In this part, I presented participants' practices of the facets of HDP that include active learning, continuous assessment, reflections and action research. The description of this unit of the case is based on my personal observation of the practice, participants' self-reports of their own practice.

### *5.2.1 Action research: The most welcomed the least effectual*

Understanding Higher education, managing teaching learning was well addressed during HDP training; however, organizational placement and Action research is the most praised aspect of HDP in terms of its importance to the participants. It has aided participants in seeing research in a new light. Most participants admitted that they had previously viewed research as requiring advanced abilities and as a task reserved for a select few.

However, the incorporation of action research in HDP has transformed them into a type of study that can be undertaken by any teacher in the field.

Participants appreciated action research the best because it simplified a topic (research) that they had previously considered complex and challenging. During the interview, the majority of the participants were enthusiastic about action research. As R3 noted:

... action research piqued my curiosity more than anything else. I used to think of myself as someone who couldn't perform research since I thought it was only for individuals with advanced degrees and knowledge. But now I see that it is something that any teacher educator may undertake.

This novice participant had been considering a type of research that would necessitate a high level of competence and a vast scale. The majority of the other participants were drawn to this aspect of the program because it provided them with an alternate method of conducting research that improved their skills and self-esteem. They were made aware that everyday classroom life can be researched, which alleviated the challenge of coming up with study topics. R9, for instance, noted:

... I believe that action research is the most effective. It taught us how to conduct research. You should be conducting research as a university instructor. It is one of our responsibilities. Now, simply in our neighborhood, there are a plethora of issues to investigate. I'm hoping to do so in the future.

Although action research is the most popular and well-received aspect of the curriculum, I believe it is the least effective. Action research is centered on improving practice rather than performing research to meet obligations or demonstrate expertise. Participants were enthusiastic about action research since it allows them to do study and publish articles. However, when asked how often he conducted action research and how effective it was in helping him improve his practice, one participant responded:

Of course, I didn't undertake research after HDP [He had to perform one as part of his HDP requirements]. Action research could do less in my profession because the problems are more or less clear, but the remedy should come from the government. R4.

As a result, action research's problem-solving approaches receive less emphasis, whereas research for publication and reputation receives adequate attention. Unlike traditional forms of study, which focus on other people, action research focuses on the researchers themselves. Action research is a self-inquiry into oneself (McNiff and Whitehead, 2002). Participants, on the other hand, appreciated action research because it provided them with insights into conducting research so that they could be labeled as researchers, not because it may help them better their profession. Except for the ones done as a requirement for HDP, the majorities of the articles published by the University's research seminars are big size and not aimed at enhancing practice.

Based on these observations and reactions, I contend that action research is the least effective because participants' understanding and practice of research do not align with the goal of action research. That is, it is not a good idea to conduct research into one's practice in order to improve it. Instead, action research is admired for bringing study subjects and concepts to life.

## 5.3 Reasons for withdrawal

In the year 2022 a total of twenty candidates were dropped out of HDP. Another topic covered in this study was why these educators stopped attending HDP. The following are

the reflections of some of the participants that are considered to be typical cases.

HDP was introduced as obligatory and compulsory. The management of the University insisted candidates to attend the course while refusing to listens any claims from the candidates. This rigidity finally resulted in wastage of time and resource as some of the candidates quitted it some way in the course. R9 witnessed the rigidity:

... In the university, I am a novice teacher. I need to put in a lot of preparation if I want to keep my job as a teacher as an excellent instructor in the institutions. I had to attend HDP, which required extra time and also, I was loaded in teaching. Because of this was forced to quite HDP training.

## 5.4 Reflection analysis

The aforementioned informants have each separately examined many case units. Teachers believed that high student loads and the requirement to write rather than ponder and share experiences among themselves were the main reasons behind training dropout. In this section, an attempt was made to connect the meanings of the units in order to arrive at a common understanding of the case.

The overall backdrop of attending HDP and putting it into action was not conducive, according to the study of the case across the units. The perceptions of people who finished the program and those who dropped out are similar. Majority of participants on both sides expressed their dissatisfaction with the program's execution. They paid close attention to the program's inflexibility. The learning environment was not pleasant or courteous; it was top down obligatory which lack snack/tea session during break. One of the most difficult challenges for those planning adult learning opportunities/lack andragogic approaches during trainings, as Murphy (2020) pointed out, is to create a good and courteous environment in which that learning can take place. In this instance, it seemed like the university was failing. Participants lose passion, become dissatisfied, stop attending, and leave the university as a result of the process' inability to elicit their motivation. In professional development activities, motivation to learn could be generated in secure, dependable, and encouraging environments characterized by meaningful relationships with compassionate individuals and instructional aides tailored to each person's unique potential (McCombs and Whisler, 1997).

Participants learned a lot about active learning, continuous evaluation, and action research, and their previous beliefs and conceptions were challenged, according to the perceptions study. This was also validated by a review of their procedures. Despite the fact that they are not really practicing the facets, their excuses for not doing so suggest that they value them. In other words, the lack of practice is related to the setting of practice, not to a disrespect for the elements of HDP. Change in practice is a result of an optimum balance of excellent professional development, explicit teaching materials, opportunity to tinker with ideas, and a supportive environment, according to Wallace and Louden (2003).

As a result, it is fair to conclude that the majority of the participants were positive in that they had been struggling to benefit from the program, as seen by their admiration for the features and their attempts to implement them where they believed it was practicable. Developers (leaders, teachers, and managers) and the developing environment, on the other side, were not as good and have eclipsed the conclusion.

# 6 Conclusions and implications

The following conclusions were made based on the results presented and the analysis made.

## 6.1 HDP Becomes More Administrative

The study comes to the conclusion that teacher educators' professional development was largely, if not entirely, controlled by the process by which they were licensed through HDP and exposed to the realm of bureaucracy. Individuals are usually self-directed and do not want to deal with bureaucratic red tape or government organizations telling them how to operate, but professionalism and personal conscience require that they stay current in their fields of practice in order to provide the best service possible (Lowenthal, 1981).

HDP is a heavily bureaucratized professional development program. It is a system-wide, mandatory program for teacher educator that reflects professional development bureaucracy. However, for professional development activities to be effective, participants should have some control over what they learn, when they learn it, and how they learn it (McCulloch et al., 2000). This is because, as adult learners, teacher educators learn best when they have the most control over the nature, speed, and approach to their learning (**knowles1989** cited In Bell and Gilbert, 1996). When mandated professional development events, such as HDP, are implemented without regard for practitioners' interests, attendance may be skewed. Participants appeared to be disengaged, if not entirely, from the process because they perceived HDP as something done to them rather than with them and for them, and some boycotted the program. HDP's emphasis on a centralized, dominated, and "generator" model of professional development (Morales and McGinn, 1982) may strengthen control, but it also suffocates initiative and innovation. Due to the required and bureaucratic structure of HDP, it was difficult to elicit active involvement and maintain attendance honesty. As a result, while creating and implementing such professional development programs, a balance between institutional and individual needs must be struck.

## 6.2 Decontextualizing HDP and practice

Teachers' teaching and professional development contexts are frequently diverse, and they have a variety of effects on teachers, their work, and their professional growth (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). A variety of institutional contextual elements influence both teaching and learning to teach. This indicates that a proper balance should be struck between the accuracy of professional development programs and the need for adaptation.

HDP, on the other hand, is a standardized professional development program for Ethiopian higher education institutions (HEIs). According to Morales and McGinn (1982), the assumption behind standardized programs is that either all instructors are the same or that the range of characteristics between institutions is consistent and doesn't alter the impact of programs. However, they argue that the setting for the teaching/learning process should vary by institution, and that little attention is paid to the great range of experiences, abilities, and interests among faculty members.

Furthermore, a reflective model of professional growth, on which HDP is epistemologically built, is fascinated or intrigued by features of the practice setting and frames those aspects in terms of the setting's particulars (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). However, because HDP is decontextualized, participants are dissatisfied with the lack of immediacy of application. Furthermore, this paradigm assumes that teaching necessitates complicated

thinking and decision-making in a variety of scenarios. When a professional development program is prescriptive and ignores the context of practice, development and change are primarily cosmetic, as HDP demonstrates. That is, it was removed from its practical setting, and the program became purely theoretical.

## 6.3 Should it be informative or transformative?

The informational aspect of HDP is another theme that is related to the aforementioned theme. The value of professionally training teacher educators cannot be overstated. However, experience has shown that the majority of programs just deliver surface experiences (Cranton, 1994). HDP produces a similar result. The program provides prescriptive information to teacher educators on specific strategies without taking into account the context in which they educate. It fails to initiate and sustain transformational learning. Teaching as a profession hasn't changed much in the last few decades. Although participants gradually recognize the value of HDP features such as active learning, continuous assessment, and action research, the purpose of the program is still purely to inform them.

Teachers are both themselves and the situations in which they find themselves. Helping them transform their practice necessitates not only assisting them in questioning their beliefs and assumptions or prescribing strategies, but also assisting them in changing their environment. Because HDP is a separate experience from the context, prescribing it to transform their profession didn't work. They are experiencing a huge increase in student enrollment during the period they are being pressed to implement HDP. Professional development activities, on the other hand, should be those that encourage people to try new things. However, expecting a change in practice as a result of HDP in the current scenario is overly optimistic. As a result, the program should take a critical posture toward the teachers' perceptions and roles, as well as the surroundings.

## 6.4 Implementations

On the basis of the findings and conclusions made, the following recommendations were forwarded.

In order to increase program attention, the HDP certification shall be valued for promotion, and competition for various positions in the university.

Assessment of HDP is by its nature qualitative and suit to adult learning. So HDLs are expected to check candidates' understanding on contents regularly during sessions and feedback on reflective activities should be provided every week to help trainees improve their teaching strategies, and also give discussion on time.

The HDP handbook should be revised and designed to andragogy level for adult trainees

The university should use various incentive and benefit mechanism to encourage and motivate the candidates in order to draw more staff members to the program.

The curriculum handbook has to be reviewed by MOE and university personnel together. Consequently, in order to fully comprehend the beneficial effects of this training program on high-quality education in general and students' academic success in particular, future researchers and scholars might carry out additional research on HDP training and its relationship to students' academic performance. Teachers acquire the skills necessary to support students' optimal learning. The strategies used by their local education system to enhance instruction and student learning may not be widely known.

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## Data Availability

Data can be made available on the behavior of the request

## Declaration of interests' statement

The author declare no competing interests.

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## Research Original Article

# Relationship of transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles with teachers' job satisfaction in secondary schools of Konso Zone, Southern Ethiopia

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**KEYWORDS:**
leadership;
leadership styles;
transactional leadership;
laissez-faire leadership;
job satisfaction

## Abstract

*The primary purpose of the study was to assess the relationship between transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles with teachers' job satisfaction in secondary schools of Konso zone, Southern Ethiopia. The study employed descriptive survey and explanatory correlational research design. The study involved 110 participants from five secondary schools namely: Abaroba, Fasha, Kemele, Arfide and Konso by systematic random sampling technique. The MLQ was employed to collect data from the rafters. The data were analysed quantitatively using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The results of this study revealed that although both leadership styles have not been practised adequately, transactional leadership style was relatively the prominent leadership style. It was also found that organizational outcome (teachers' job satisfaction) was considerably effective in the schools. From transactional leadership factors although all of them have not been practiced adequately, contingent reward was perceived as the most effective component in the schools. Respondents' age was found to be minimally altering the correlation between laissez-faire and teachers job satisfaction. The study suggested employing transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles via considering the contingency theory as the paramount important for schools effectiveness. The researchers also recommended to give more attention by the concerning parties in providing school leaders a targeted training that will help them develop a better understanding about the different leadership styles and the associated organizational outcomes.*

## 1 Introduction

There is no one best definition for the term leadership; rather various scholars defined it in varies ways. For instance, Yukl (1998) defined leadership as the process of controlling followers to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how it can be done effectively, and the process of enabling individual and collective efforts to achieve the mutually inclusive objectives of the organization. House and Shamir (1993) define leadership as the skill of an individual person to inspire others towards the collective organizational vision in sacrificing his/her self and to contribute to the achievement of the

intended vision and being with others in sacrificing oneself beyond the expected role. Schein (1985) identifies leadership is as the ability of alter corrective process to start evolutionary with no consideration of followers' culture. Chemers (1997) also defines the term leadership as a process of impacting the people and their actions in identifying their gaps to make the followers provided with the potential of performing the organizational tasks. From these definitions it can be seen that leadership is taken as a group phenomenon that involves the interaction between two or more persons (Janda, 1960). Similarly, Yukl (2013) defined as the nature of the influencing process in such a way that its result is occurred between a leader and followers and how this influencing process is expressed by the changed nature of leader's and follower thoughts including the situation in which the influencing process is happen.

Among the different educators who attempted to define the term leadership Burns (1978) was the prominent one. He elaborated the characteristics of leadership as:

"A leader induces followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations, the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations of both leaders and followers and the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers' values and motivations"

From these definitions it can be learned that leadership can be viewed as a process that includes interaction among three variables namely; leader, follower and situation.

Job satisfaction has been defined as differently by scholars. For instance, Gull and Zaidi (2012) defined job satisfaction as the perception of followers towards the task that the followers undertake. The authors also claimed that job satisfaction is believe that the followers have towards anything which is assumed to be paramount important to them such as benefits, promotional opportunities, supervision, coworkers, working conditions and the work itself. Sattar et al. (2012) define it as the extent to which the followers are being enthusiastic to attain the organizational goal. Based on this definition, the followers strive to address their problems in that they try to bridge the difference between expectation and actual achievement is labelled as job satisfaction (Sattar et al., 2012). Job satisfaction has been influenced by leaders' leadership styles. For instance, Bass and Avolio (2000) argue that the types of relationship between leaders and followers determines employees' job satisfaction. Bizhan et al. (2013) also noted that when managers/leaders have the skills and techniques to effectively lead the relationship between managers and employees' it will result in higher motivation and job satisfaction.

Leadership style is defined by varies scholars in different ways. For instance, Casmir (2001) states it as a pattern of emphases, indexed by frequency or intensity of specific leadership behavior or attitudes, which a leader places on the different leadership functions. Bass (1985) are classified leadership styles as: Transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles. Burns (1978) affirms that transactional and transformational leadership are at opposite ends of a range. On the contrary, Bass (1985) contends that leader can use transformational and transactional leadership behaviour where the situation is viewed appropriate. This ideal profile of the leaders can be exhibited in three leadership styles including their factors transformational, transactional leadership factors and management-by-exception (passive) tightly less frequently) and finally the laissez-faire behaviour (Bass and Avolio, 1994).

Burns (1978) defines transactional leadership as follows: it is the mutual process of mobilizing, with persons with certain motives and values, various resources, in a context of competition in order to realize goals with the participation leaders and followers. The nature of this leadership style is so indispensable in such a way that leaders and followers can mutually or separately undertake a given action for the sake of attain the intended goals of the organization. As the transactions carried out between leaders and their followers, the leader should take in to account the interest of their followers that they

need from their work, give the response for the followers' self-interest, come up with the necessary rewards and give that rewards (Bass, 1985). He also assured that this leadership style includes factors such as management-by exception and contingent reward. A transactional leader depends on management by exception are mostly endeavour to take measurement on the failures of the organization. They measure the achievement of the organization in light of the set standards.

Transactional leader clearly discuss with the followers on what and how they are awarded, and what they are expected to attain to get that rewards. Leaders apply both reward and punishment on the bases of the followers performance in that reward for well performed and punishment for not performed well (Podsakoff, 1982). He also asserted that there is a positive connection between leaders' contingent reward behaviour and followers' performance and satisfaction. In contrast to the previous statement there is no connection between contingent punishment behaviour and followers' performance or job satisfaction. Transactional leadership marks failures in terms of motivating followers and keeping the transaction procedure in a way that depends on negotiating and continuing process. In transactional leadership the connection between leaders and followers is shallow though, they focus on increasing their profit from transaction. Hence, leaders have to claim with motivational and interpersonal aspects that help the group to elevate its capability of responding to organizational and environmental desires. Furthermore, leaders are expected to influence their followers' skills through not only providing contingent rewards and management-by-exception but also empower them to work harder and more effective (Burns, 1978).

Bass and Avolio (1993) define laissez-faire leadership as leadership is considered as nonexistent and is absent. They also asserted laissez-faire (passive-avoidance) leadership style, as there is no intervention of the assigned leaders with having no transactions or/and agreements with followers. This leadership style discourages feedback, rewards, involvement of the followers in the actions, no or less motivation, recognition and satisfaction of followers need and prevalence of delayed decisions. Laissez-faire leadership is described as passive leadership in which leaders have less influence over their followers and any action in the organization and maintain their involvement in lower level and keep to make decision until the problem reach on serious position. They give their followers over and completely freedom of carrying out the organizational action.

## 2 Research Problem

It is about 30 years that different researchers attempted to investigate the relationship between leadership styles and organizational outcome such as job satisfaction. Most of that researchers focused on the independent variables such as transformational, transactional, laissez-faire as well as other variables such as trust leadership, leader member exchange, and leadership structure. In another way, researchers also carried out studies on dependent variables such as organizational citizenship behaviour, employee attitudes, and performance measurement by employing different methods of data analysis. For instance, Fuller et al. (1996) conducted a meta-analyses on the effects of transformational leadership style (charismatic) and organizational outcome (satisfaction with the leader, perceived leader effectiveness and performance). They also included several potential moderators: type of performance measure, type of research design (multisource or not), level of the leader, and sample sectoral context. They found as there is positive and significant relationships between charismatic leadership and organizational outcome (satisfaction with the leader, perceived leader effectiveness and performance). They also found a significantly stronger correlation for subjective performance measures than for objective ones, indicating that these two reflect different aspects of effectiveness. However, generalization cannot be made on the bases of the given situation because the

degree of correlation for different variables was not consistent.

Dumdum et al. (2002) carried out a meta-analysis on the effect of transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership and job satisfaction. The results of this study revealed that both transformational and transactional leadership styles are positively correlated to job satisfaction and also laissez-faire leadership style was negatively correlated to effectiveness and satisfaction. Judge and Piccolo (2004) analyzed the effects of transformational and transactional leadership on job satisfaction. Their finding shows that there was positive correlation between both transformational and transactional leadership styles and job satisfaction. Wang et al. (2011) also explored the effect of transformational leadership style and organizational performance which was analysed in three levels at individual, team, and organization level. The finding reveals that there is a strong relationship between transformational leadership style and contextual performance than task performance. Likewise, there is a strong relationship between transformational leadership style and team level performance and the is a weak relationship with organizational level performance and individual level performance.

Different researchers conducted their studies on leadership styles and its effectiveness on organizational outcomes (extra effort, effectiveness and job satisfaction) to identify the prominent leadership style and to determine the relationship exist between transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles and job satisfaction. For instance, Alloubani et al. (2015) studied the impacts of transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles on leadership outcomes. However, this study didn't cover the relationship between overall leadership styles and over all organizational outcomes and each leadership styles components with each organizational outcome (extra effort, effectiveness and job satisfaction). Similarly, Zahoor and Khan (2018) conducted a study on leadership styles and their influence on organizational outcome such as job satisfaction. In their study, they employed both interactive and diagnosis research approach. However, the research results did not demonstrate that which leadership style is more effective, encourages employees extra effort and what correlation exists between independent and dependent variables. On the other hand, Valldeneu et al. (2019) carried out his study on leadership styles and organizational outcome (job satisfaction). However, this study did not investigate the correlation between overall leadership style measures and overall organizational outcome measures such as extra effort, effectiveness and job satisfaction. In addition, this research did not measure the relationship existing between each of leadership styles and organizational outcome (job satisfaction).

In the Ethiopian context, many school principals are assigning by the government without considering their training and capacity of leadership. FDRE (2010) pointed out that lack of the ability to planning and managing the school performance which in turn has the possibility to decrease the students' performance is taken as the major challenge of Ethiopia education system in general and southern Ethiopia in particular. Therefore, the mentioned challenges are not confined only in a particular area of the country rather they are also assumed as country wide problems. Likewise, according to the observation of the researcher, in Konso zone the problem of school leadership is currently at critical level so that it considerably needs due attention for come up with the possible solution.

The reason behind conducting thus study is even though different researchers strived to conduct research on relationship between leadership styles and organizational outcomes (extra effort, effectiveness and job satisfaction); no one has covered those transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles with organizational outcome (teachers' job satisfaction). Even though, the number of researches conducted in World and Ethiopia is so enormous, yet these researchers used different dimension and/or variables of both leadership styles as well as organizational outcome (job satisfaction) in that the present research is different from the others. The present research mainly focused to probe the extent to which transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles are practiced and correlated to job satisfaction in secondary schools of Konso zone. In this regard to the

researchers knowledge no one has conducted a research on these variables that in the study area.

## 2.1 Hypotheses

Hypothesis Question One: Does transactional or laissez-faire leadership style is the most prominent in the secondary schools of Konso zone?

Ho One: There is no significant positive relationship between transactional leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction.

Ho Two: There is no significant positive relationship between laissez-faire leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction.

Ho Three: There is no significant relationship between teachers' age and their job satisfaction.

Ho Four: There is no significant relationship between teachers' work experience and their job satisfaction.

## 2.2 Objectives

The general objective of this study was to assess the relationship between transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles and teachers' job satisfaction in Konso zone, southern Ethiopia. More specifically this study aims at:

1. Determining which leadership style i.e. transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles is dominant;
2. Examining the extent to which transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles are related with teachers' job satisfaction and
3. Exploring the extent to which age and work experience status of teachers mediate the relationship between transactional and laissez-fire leadership styles and teachers job satisfaction

### 2.3 Conceptual framework

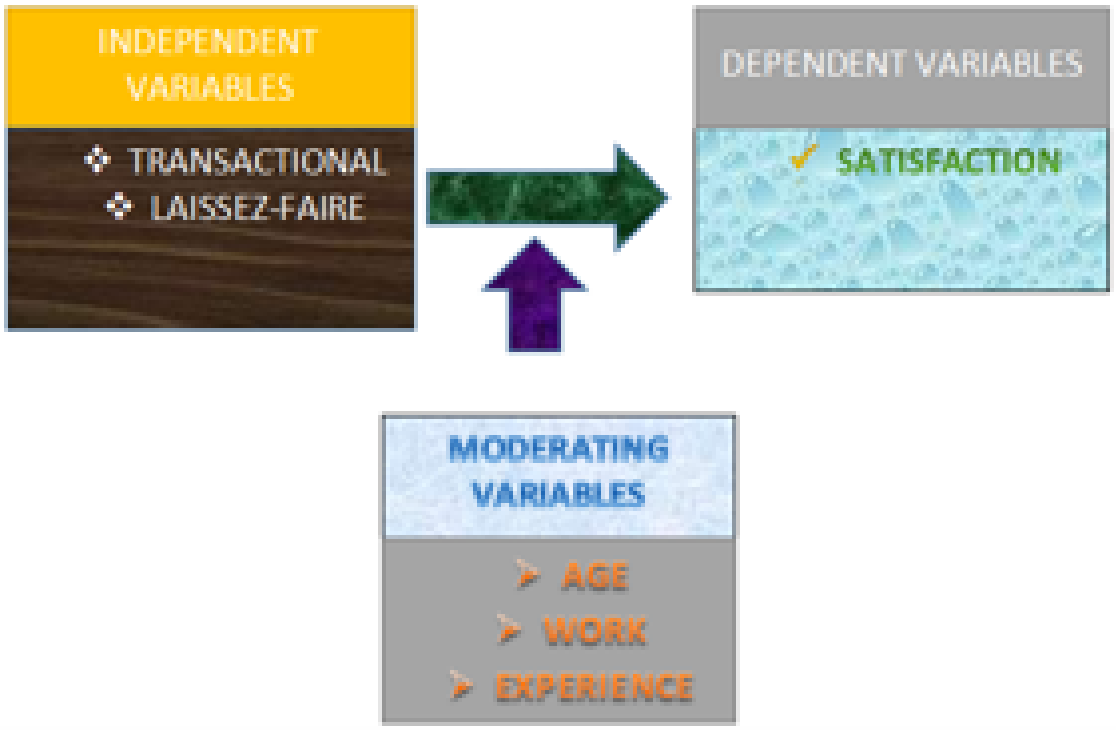



Figure 1: Conceptual Frame Work of Leadership Styles and Organizational Outcomes

Source: developed by the researchers (2023)

The above conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between leadership styles and organizational outcome. But besides the independent variables (transactional and laissez-faire), there are also moderating variables that are likely to alter the relationship of independent variables with dependent variables (job satisfaction). Hence, age and work experience are considered as moderator variables for this study. That means these moderating variables instead of being affected by independent variables (transactional and laissez-faire) they strengthen the relationship existing between the two variables.

## 3 Research Methods

This study employed descriptive survey and explanatory correlational research design. As described by Creswell (2012) Survey research designs are procedures in quantitative research in which investigators administer a survey to a sample to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the total population. Quantitative research method was employed in this research. The reason why the research has given due attention to quantitative method is because of it helps to assess the relationship between leadership styles and organizational outcomes so as to collect large quantitative data from the respondents. It is a predetermined approach in which the researcher uses closed-ended questionnaires.

## 3.1 The study variables

The major purpose of the study is assessing the relationship between leadership styles and organizational outcomes. The specific objectives of the research are determining the most dominant leadership styles (transactional, transformational and laissez-fair) and comprehending the extent to which leadership styles (transactional, transformational and laissez-fair) are connected with organizational outcomes (effectiveness, extra effort and satisfaction). Therefore, the research comprised the major variables namely, independent and dependent variables. The independent variables of the research are transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles whereas dependent variables of the study are organizational outcomes namely, organizational effectiveness, employees extra effort and job satisfaction. The three leadership styles are also used as a predictor whereas organizational outcomes are used as a criterion. In addition to the major variables, moderating variables such as gender, age, work experience and level of education were employed to enhance the contribution for the correlation exists between independent and dependent variables. A moderator variable may reduce or enhance the direction of the relationship between the independent variable and a dependent variable, or it may even change the direction of the relationship between the two variables from positive to negative or visa-versa.

## 3.2 Sources of data

The primary sources of data were obtained from secondary school teachers. The selection of those people as a source of data was based on the expectation of the researcher that they would have better information and experiences on the relationship between leadership styles and organizational outcomes of secondary schools' of Konso zone. In this respect, the researcher directly encountered with teachers to examine their perception towards the leadership styles and its effect on organizational outcomes. The data were collected through the standardized instrument that is multifactor leadership questioner. Moreover, the data already available is appropriate as secondary sources in such a way that the researcher can only review from its sources. In this research, the researcher reviewed varies literature related to the topic under the study which were found from the internet and in libraries. The paramount importance of using secondary sources of data for this research was due to the expectation of the data to enrich the study with sufficient reference materials which enable the researcher to conduct valid, reliable, relevant, credible research and at the end to come up with the best possible findings.

## 3.3 Population and Sampling

From five administrative structures of the zone, Karat zuria Woreda and Kena Woreda as well as Karat town administration were selected as a sample structures whereas Segen zuria woreda was taken as a structure in which the researcher conducted pilot test questioner. In Konso zone there are ten secondary schools (grade 9-12). Out of this number, only 5(50%) of the secondary schools namely: Konso, Abaroba, Arfide, Fasha and Kemele secondary schools were selected for the study. In these secondary schools, there are 323 teachers that were taken as a target population. Among them 110(34%) were selected using systematic random sampling technique after listing the names alphabetically.

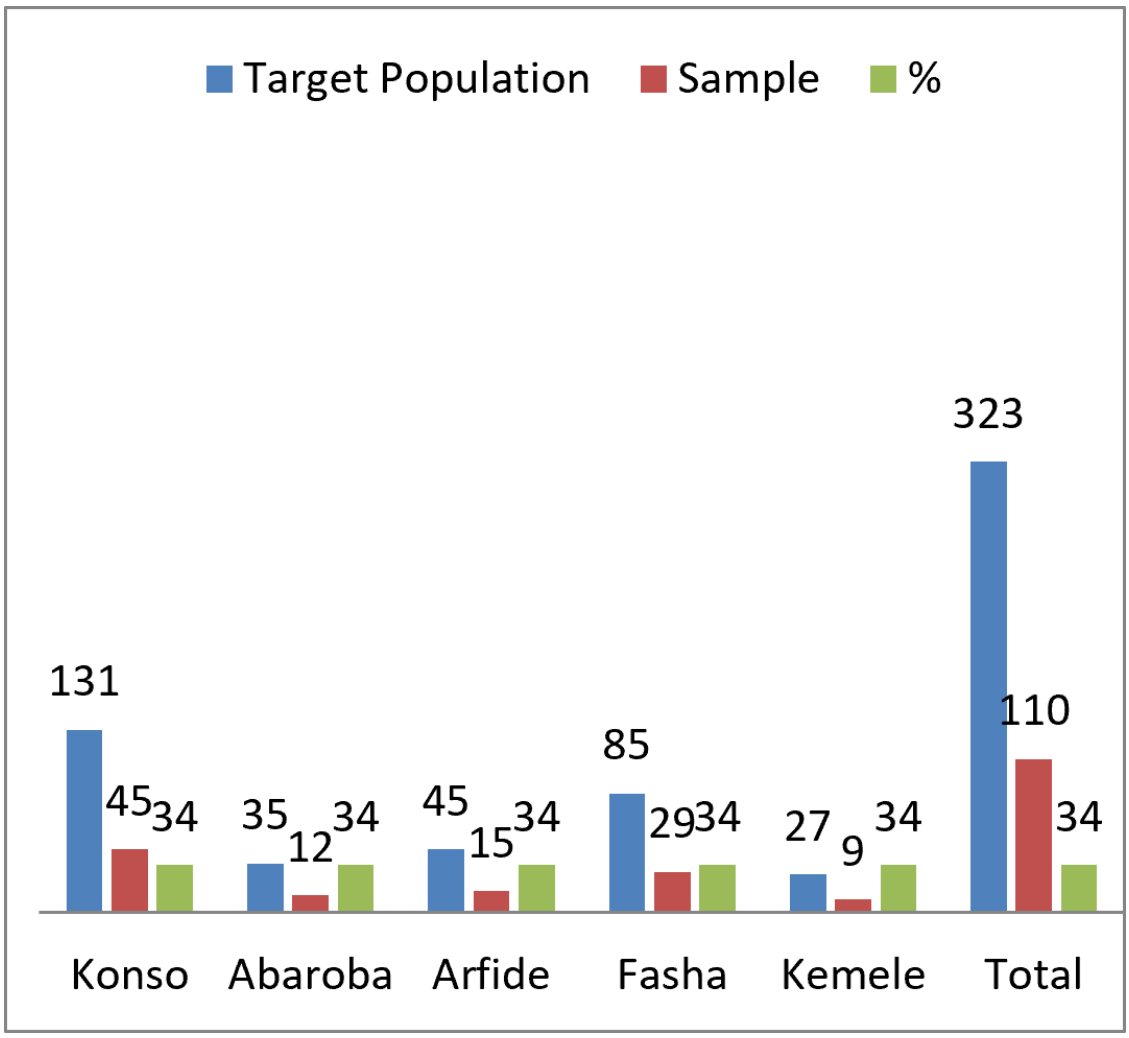



Figure 2: Population and Sample size

Source: Own competition, (2023)

## 3.4 Data collection instruments

The MLQ used for the study consists of two forms: leader form and rater form. The leader form is used for self-evaluation, and is completed by leaders whereas the rater form is used by the followers to assess leadership of their leader (Bass and Avolio, 2004). The MFQ instrument forms and scoring guide (form 5x-short) mind garden Inc. was adapted from Avolio and Bass (2020) by making a few adjustments. For the present study, the researcher employed the rater form of data collection instrument that has 45 items.

Leadership styles and organizational outcome were assessed by the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire that was exerted as a crucial instrument of data collection. The current version of the MLQ has forty-five items that are used to evaluate the leadership behaviors and organizational outcomes. According to Bass and Avolio (2004), MLQ can be used to measure the prominence of the transformational, transactional, and laissez-fire [passive-avoidant] behavior of leadership styles to attain better organizational outcomes. Transformational leadership (TFL) factors consist of Idealized Attributes (IA), Idealized Behaviors (IB), Inspirational Motivation (IM), Intellectual Stimulation (IS) and Individual

Consideration (IC). Transactional leadership (TSL) factors consist of Contingent Reward (CR), Management by Exception (Active) (MBEA) and Management by Exception (Passive) (MBEP). However, Laissez-Faire leadership (LF) does not have any factors pertaining to it. Organizational outcome has three factors namely Extra Effort (EE), Effectiveness (EFF), and Satisfaction (SAT). As the follower fills out the rater form, he/she should answers each questions by selecting a number on a scale of 0 to 4: 0 = not at all, 1 = once in a while, 2 = sometimes, 3 = fairly often, and 4 = frequently, if not always.

Item number 10, 18, 21 and 25 are components of IA. The IA scores are calculated by summing the total IA points of each respondent, and then dividing that number by 4. Item number 6, 14, 23, and 34 are components of IB. The scores of IB are likewise calculated by acquiring the total IB score, and dividing by 4. Item number 9, 13, 26, and 36 are components of IM. Item number 2, 8, 30, and 32 are components of IS. Item number 15, 19, 29, and 31 are components of IC. The scores of IM, IS, and IC are determined by the same simple algorithm as IA and IB.

The CR scores are calculated by summing the total CR points of each respondent, and then dividing that number by 4. Item number 1, 11, 16, and 35 are components of CR. The scores of MBEA are likewise calculated by acquiring the total MBEA score, and dividing by 4. Item number 4, 22, 24, and 27 are components of MBEA. The scores of MBEP are calculated by taking the total MBEP score and dividing by 4. Item number 3, 12, 17, and 20 are components of MBEP. The scores of LF are calculated by summing the composite LF score, and once again, dividing by 4. Item number 5, 7, 28, and 33 are components of LF. Item number 39, 42, and 44 are components of EE. The scores of EE are calculated by taking the total EE score and dividing by 3. Item number 37, 40, 43, and 45 are components of EFF. The scores of EFF are calculated by summing the composite EFF score, and once again, dividing by 4. Item number 38 and 41 are the only two components of SAT. The scores of SAT are determined by adding the two scores together, and dividing by 2. On the other hand, respondents were also asked to answer a number of demographic questions in the RDQ. RDQ includes age, gender, educational status, working experience at current profession. The questionnaire is general in nature and no personal identifiable information was collected to ensure anonymity among the respondents.

Before administrate data, the questionnaire was tested for validity and reliability. In order to make the necessary correction and improvement on the questionnaire items, pilot test was conducted for the content validity at Aylota dokatu secondary school which is not a part of sampled schools. The draft questionnaire was distributed and filled out with 35 teachers sampled through simple random sampling technique. In addition to this, the experienced colleagues also confirmed the questionnaire and provided their corrections accordingly. Hence, some adjustment was made on the questionnaire to make the research more valid and reliable.

## 3.5 Validity and reliability

Gay et al. (2009) described validity as "the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure and, consequently, permits appropriate interpretation of scores". They also identified four Validity measuring instruments: content, criterion-related, construct and consequential validity. The validity of the MLQ was consistently confirmed as an effective means of measurement through their application in a large volume of credible studies (Bass and Avolio, 2004). In addition to that they asserted as the validity of MLQ has been demonstrated by a large number of studies throughout a diverse group of organizations and in a variety of countries. In this study, the validity of the MLQ instrument was assured through the study of prominent researchers. Nevertheless, its

effectiveness was asserted with different researchers, the researcher verified it through exerting content validity form for its more trustworthiness.

Reliability as the degree to which a test consistently measures whatever it is measuring (Gay et al., 2009). These authors also noted that, there are five types of reliability measuring instruments: stability, equivalence, equivalence and stability, internal consistency, and scorer/rater. Muenjohn and Armstrong (2008) asserted that the reliability of MLQ with a Cronbach's alpha value is .86 for the original MLQ and .87 for the translated one. Moreover, Antonakis et al. (2003) suggested that the current version of the MLQ (Form 5X) is a reliable instrument that can adequately measure the nine components comprising the full-range theory of leadership. Therefore, even though its reliability was verified by different researchers, the researchers also confirmed it again using Cronbach's alpha value. Accordingly, the reliability of MLQ with cronbach's alpha value was found to be .93 that is greater than .90. Therefore, there is a very strong internal consistency among the MLQ items.

## 3.6 Methods of data analysis

The major method of data analysis by this study were descriptive and inferential statistics methods. Frequency, mean, standard deviation were calculated with the help of descriptive statistics. On the other hand, Correlation analysis is used to identify the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables. Validity of the MLQ instrument was assured through the study of prominent researchers. Nevertheless, its effectiveness was asserted with different researchers, the researcher verified it through exerting content validity form for its more trustworthiness. Even though MFQ items reliability was verified by different researchers, the researchers also confirmed it again using Cronbach's alpha value. Accordingly, the Cronbach's alpha value for the total 45 items of the present research is .93 or 93% that shows the existence of very strong internal consistency among the MLQ items. Moreover, the investigators employed Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient that has been used to measure the relationship between leadership styles and organizational outcome.

## 3.7 Ethical consideration

According to Bryman and Bell (2007) there are ten Principles of ethical considerations that should be considered in conducting research. The research has not been subjected to harm anyone who is involved in it, respected the dignity and full consent of the participants and ensured the privacy of the research respondents. The study ensured the confidence level of the research data and anonymity of individuals and organizations participate in the research. Any deception or exaggeration about the aims and objectives of the research was avoided. Any type of communication in relation to the researchers was done with honesty and transparency. For consensus the permission letter obtained from Konso zone Education department has been given to all schools and it enabled the respondents to be provided with sufficient information pertaining to the research purpose and informed that their response will be kept confidential. Moreover, the researchers obtained permission from the participant teachers before the questionnaires was administered. The researchers willingly answered any questions that the respondents asked for more clarity. In addition, the researchers gave brief explanation to make their participation being completely on voluntary basis. The researchers then asked them to carefully read the provided participant instructions and each items of the questioner.

# 4 Results

In this section the data obtained for the study are presented in tables followed by discussion of findings organized based on the hypotheses formulated.

## 4.1 Normality test of the data distribution

Table 1: Data Normality Test in Shapiro Wilk Theory Derived Numerical Method

| Variables | Statistics | Df | Sign |
|---|---|---|---|
| Transactional leadership style | .985 | 110 | .245 |
| Laissez-faire leadership style | .978 | 110 | .068 |
| Teachers Job Satisfaction | .969 | 110 | .005 |

Source: own survey data (2023)

The output presented on Table 1 indicates that there is a significant difference on the data distribution of transactional and laissez-faire leadership style (at p. value of both styles is $> .05$) and teachers' job satisfaction (at p $> .01$). This result reveals that data are normally distributed so that one can easily conclude as means are considerably good representatives of the data. The normality test managed for transactional, laissez-faire and satisfaction on histogram also much coincided with Shapiro Wilk test method in such a way that data were normally distributed

## 4.2 The prominence of leadership styles

One of the objectives of this study was to identify weather transactional or laissez-faire leadership style is the most prominent leadership styles practiced in the secondary schools of Konso zone.

Table 2: Cross-Tabulation of Mean and Standard Deviation for Transactional and Laissez-faire Leadership Styles and Satisfaction

| Variables | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Leadership Styles | 110 | 1.908 | .478 |
| Organizational Outcomes | 110 | 2.209 | .929 |

Source: own survey data (2023)

The data presented in Table 2 shows that leaders of the secondary schools of Konso zone are loosely transactional and laissez-faire leaders. However, comparatively, transactional leadership style is more dominant in those schools (M = 1.908, SD = .478). Regarding job satisfaction, it was found that teachers' job satisfaction is very low (M = 2.209, std. deviation = .929).

Table 3: Cross-Tabulation of Mean and Std. Deviation for Transactional and Laissez-faire Leadership Styles Factors

| Leadership Styles | Leadership Factors | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Transactional Leadership | Contingent Reward | 110 | 2.181 | .799 |
| | Management by Exception Active | 110 | 1.986 | .607 |
| | Management by Exception Passive | 110 | 1.550 | .806 |
| Laissez-faire Leadership | Laissez-faire leadership | 110 | 1.843 | .780 |

Source: own survey data (2023)

Regarding the components of the transactional leadership style, the contingent reward as a component of transactional leadership factor forms the basis of the constructive components of transactional leadership behavior (Bass, 1998; Bass and Avolio, 1997). Here leader focuses on providing rewards to followers who addressed the predetermined goals of the organization through the process of exchange, promises and delivers rewards to the followers. On the other hand, management by exception works on the bases of time leaders give to the intervention process. The contingent reinforcement factor has been categorized into two distinct factors:

(a) management-by-exception active and (b) management-by-exception passive. The former, is a corrective transaction, whereby the leader actively watches for deviations from the norm, and takes action when outcomes do not match standards whereas the later mainly accompanied by the delayed intervention of the leaders (Avolio et al., 1995). It also involves waiting, and intervening only if standards are not met, or when things go wrong that is accompanied with the longer delay (Bass, 1998; Avolio and Bass, 1997).

The data presented on Table 3 shows that although the mean value is low (M = 2.181, SD = .799). However, when compared to the three components of transactional leadership styles the contingent reward is slightly available in secondary schools of Konso zone. On the other hand, management by exceptional active and management by exceptional passive factors are very low (M = 1.986, SD = .607) as compared to the three component variables. In this regard, Bizhan et al. (2013) argue that transactional leadership style contributes to the school performance indicators such as creates teachers' satisfaction, in their work in the schools. On the other hand, the laissez-fair leadership style is relatively low (M = 1.843, SD = .780) as compared to the transactional variable in secondary schools of the zone.

That means leaders of the schools do not adequately practice either of the leadership styles secondary schools of Konso zone. Therefore, the null hypothesis transactional or laissez-faire leadership style is the most prominent leadership styles practiced in the secondary schools of Konso zone is rejected.

This finding is consistent with Valldeneu et al. (2019) findings that disclose laissez-faire leadership style has the lowest mean. In fact laissez-faire leadership style is not considerably effective in increasing job satisfaction. For instance, Bizhan et al. (2013) argue that the more managers use laissez-faire style in their leadership; the more employees' performance is reduced. In addition to that, Antonek and House (2002) realized that laissez-fare leadership style contributed to high to medium decrease teachers' satisfaction in their work in schools. However, the results show that both transactional and laissez-fare leadership style has not been practiced in secondary schools of Konso zone.

## 4.3 The relationship between transactional leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction

Table 4: The Relationship between Transactional Leadership Styles and job Satisfaction

| | | Transactional | Satisfaction |
|---|---|---|---|
| Transactional | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .449** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 110 | 110 |
| Satisfaction | Pearson Correlation | .449** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 110 | 110 |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: own survey data (2023)

The data presented on the table above shows that transactional leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction are positively correlated having moderate level of relationship and this relationship is statistically significant ($r = .449$, $p < .01$). That means there is a direct proportionality between the two measured variables in that when one variable increase the other also increase and vice versa and thus the null hypothesis should be rejected. This finding is consistent with the findings of Dumdum et al. (2002) and Judge and Piccolo (2004) verified that the correlation of transactional leadership style with followers' satisfaction is positive and statistically significant. Similarly, For Alloubani et al. (2015) verified that transactional leadership style is positively correlated to job satisfaction and statistically there is a significant relationship with organizational outcomes. However, in contrary to the findings of this study, the study by Alloubani et al. (2015) asserted that there was negative correlation between transactional leadership and job satisfaction even though there is statistically significant relationship between the mentioned variables.

## 4.4 The relationship between laissez-faire leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction

Table 5: The Relationship between Laissez-faire Leadership Styles and Satisfaction

| | | Laissez-faire | Satisfaction |
|---|---|---|---|
| Laissez-faire | Pearson Correlation | 1 | -.105 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .277 |
| | N | 110 | 110 |
| Satisfaction | Pearson Correlation | -.105 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .277 | |
| | N | 110 | 110 |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: own survey data (2023)

The result presented on the table 5 shows that the laissez-faire leadership style and job satisfaction are negatively correlated with a negligible level of relationship and this relationship is statistically insignificant ($r = -.105$, $p > .05$). That means the increase of

one variable results in a decrease of the other variable and visa verse. Therefore, null hypothesis was accepted or failed to be rejected. The results are consistent with other findings. For instance, Alloubani et al. (2015) verified that laissez-faire leadership style is negatively correlated with job satisfaction. Similarly, Hina and Zafar (2018) asserted that there is negative correlation between laissez-faire leadership style and teachers job satisfaction.

## 4.5 The relationship between teachers' age and work experience and their job satisfaction

Table 6: Correlation between Moderator Variables (age and work experience) and Organizational Outcome (Satisfaction)

| Variables | Age | Work Experience | Transactional | Laissez-faire | Satisfaction | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .850** | -.137 | .090 | -.130 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 | .152 | .352 | .175 |
| | N | 110 | 110 | 110 | 110 | 110 |
| Work Experience | Pearson Correlation | .850** | 1 | -.151 | .045 | -.064 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | | .116 | .647 | .506 |
| | N | 110 | 110 | 110 | 110 | 110 |
| Transactional | Pearson Correlation | -.137 | -.151 | 1 | .292** | .449** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .152 | .116 | | .002 | .000 |
| | N | 110 | 110 | 110 | 110 | 110 |
| Laissez-faire | Pearson Correlation | .090 | .045 | .292** | 1 | -.105 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .352 | .647 | .002 | | .277 |
| | N | 110 | 110 | 110 | 110 | 110 |
| Satisfaction | Pearson Correlation | -.130 | -.064 | .449** | -.105 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .175 | .506 | .000 | .277 | |
| | N | 110 | 110 | 110 | 110 | 110 |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The data presented on Table 6 above shows the correlation between moderator variables (age and work experience) and teachers' job satisfaction. The results show that translational leadership style is moderately, positively and significantly correlated with teachers' job satisfaction (at $r = .449$, $p < .01$). However, teachers age didn't moderate the relationship between the two variables with ($r = -.130$, $p > .05$). Therefore, teachers' age didn't have an effect on the relationship between transactional leadership style and teachers job satisfaction. Therefore, the null hypothesis there is no significant relationship between teachers' age and their job satisfaction is accepted.

### *4.5.1 The relationship between teachers' work experience and their job satisfaction*

Moreover, teachers work experience did not moderate the relationship between the two variables with ($r = .064$, $p > .01$). This result indicates that teachers' work experience and their job satisfaction are not correlated. On the other hand, there is negligible, negative and no significant correlation between laissez-faire leadership style and teachers' level of job satisfaction (at $r = -.105$, $p > .05$). Similarly, teachers age is negligibly moderate the relationship between the two variables with no significant correlation ($r = -.130$, $p > .05$). There is very weak/negligible correlation between teachers' age status and their job satisfaction. Nevertheless, teachers' job satisfaction has too minimal alteration on the correlation exists between the mentioned two variables.

In the case of laissez-faire and level of teachers job satisfaction there is negligible, negative and no significant correlation between them (at r = -.105, p > .05). But, teachers work experience status doesn't has alteration on the relationship between laissez-faire leadership style and level of teachers satisfaction with no significant correlation (r = .064, p > .05). To this end, teachers' age status and work experience didn't bring significant alteration on the correlation exist between transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles and teachers job satisfaction. Therefore, the null hypothesis there is no significant relationship between teachers' work experience and their job satisfaction is accepted.

## 5 Conclusions

The study was aimed at identifying the leadership style that have been dominantly employed and examining the extent to which transactional and laissez-fair leadership styles are related with teachers' job satisfaction and also exploring the extent to which age and work experience of teachers mediate the relationship between transactional and laissez-fire leadership styles and their job satisfaction. Based on the results obtained the following conclusions are made.

The sum of all means for both transactional and laissez-faire leadership style indicates that although the mean scores of both leadership styles is very low transactional leadership style is slightly employed than laissez-faire leadership style. That means leaders of the schools are not adequately practicing either of the leadership styles in secondary schools of Konso zone. Regarding teachers' job satisfaction although leaders of Konso zone secondary schools are more of transactional than laissez-faire teachers' job satisfaction is very low.

Regarding the relationship between transactional leadership style and teachers job satisfaction there is a positive and moderate level of correlation between the two measured variables. This relationship is statistically significant. That means when transactional leadership style increases the satisfaction also increases and vise-versa. On the other hand, the laissez-faire leadership style and job satisfaction are negatively correlated with a negligible level of relationship and this relationship is statistically insignificant. That means as leaders practice a more laissez-faire leadership style job satisfaction decreases.

Regarding the relationship between the components of transactional leadership style such as age, gender, work experience and level of education and teachers' job satisfaction the results show that teachers' work experience averagely moderate the transactional leadership style and teachers job satisfaction secondary schools of the zone. On the other hand, teachers work experience did not moderate the relationship between laissez-faire leadership style and teachers job satisfaction of the zone. The relationship existing between laissez-fair leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction display that it has negative and negligible level of relationship which is statistically insignificant. As far as there is an inverse proportionality between the two variables, there is the increase of one variable with the decrease of another variable and vise-versa. The result verifies that when the laissez-faire leadership style decreases, the teachers' satisfaction increases in the secondary schools of Konso zone. There is also a negligible, negative and insignificant correlation between laissez-faire leadership style and teachers' level of job satisfaction. Similarly, teachers age is negligibly moderate the relationship between the two variables with no significant correlation. There is very weak/negligible correlation between teachers' age and their job satisfaction. Therefore, teachers' job satisfaction has too minimal alteration on the correlation exists between the mentioned two variables. Therefore,

# 6 Recommendations

Transactional and laissez-fare leadership styles are no longer effective in the view point of teachers in relation to age, gender, work experience and level of education. Nevertheless, comparatively transactional leadership style is slightly effective than laissez-faire leadership style. Indeed, leaders are expected to employ both transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles, due to no absolute leadership style. This concept is highly supported by contingency theory in that it assumes the better approach is one that can be suitable for the existing statuesque rather than inevitably try to apply different leadership styles at the same time. The important idea is to "match the leader's style with the situation most favorable for their [leaders] success" (Daft and Marcic, 2006). Where the situation allows transactional or laissez-faire leadership style, it is not important to use further leadership style. Therefore leaders are suggested to use leadership styles on bases of organizational environment and existing statuesque. They are also expected not to practice a particular leadership style as something mandatory.

The school leaders of secondary schools of Konso zone attributed a quality of transactional leadership in terms of contingent reward. Thus, the school leaders' give help to teachers in exchange for their efforts, discuss who is responsible for attaining specific performance goals, and make it clear what each one can expect to receive when performance targets are reached and express satisfaction when teachers meet with their expectations.

Transactional leadership style such as management by exceptional active and passive were perceived as no longer effective in secondary schools of Konso zone. Hence, leaders don't pay attention on irregularities, mistakes, exceptions and which may be deviated from expected standards, don't devote teachers to give attention to mistakes, complaints and failings, are not always aware of all mistakes and direct their attention to failings so as to attain the expected standards. Furthermore, according to the study result laissez-faire leadership style is totally ineffective. Along of leaders converse about teachers most important beliefs and values, avoids getting involved when important matters arise, are absent when teachers need them and avoids making decisions. Therefore, to fill the mentioned gaps, the zone and Woreda government are requested to facilitate capacity building trainings on the title labeled "the relationship between leadership styles and organizational outcomes and the likes."

The types of research designs employed for this research were descriptive survey and explanatory correlational research designs in which the mean and std. deviation and Pearson product moment correlation coefficient were employed to determine the prominent leadership styles and the relationship exists between the leadership styles and organizational outcomes. Therefore, the further study researchers are requested to conduct their study under the theme "the effects of leadership styles on organizational outcomes". For this title the researchers are recommended to exert liner regression type of analysis via using inferential statistics. Besides, the researchers are also suggested to calculate ANOVA and t-test type of statistical analysis in that the former is employed to comprehend the most different variable from the others whereas the latter is exerted to distinguish the existence of statistical difference between the variables. The researchers employed quantitative research method using only questioner. Hence, for more accuracy of the result the researchers suggest other researchers to employ qualitative method of data analysis using interview and focus group discussion tools of data collection which are used to triangulate the obtained results or/and findings. Moreover, the results of this study can be used as the source of data for the further researchers. Thus, other researchers are suggested to use this research to advance further studies who are interested in conducting their study on the related title.

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## Data Availability

Data can be made available on the behavior of the request

## Declaration of interests' statement

The author declare no competing interests.

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## Research Original Article

# Challenges encountered by students with visual impairment in the exclusion of Mathematics education

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## Abstract

*The integration of students with visual impairment in learning mathematics in school constitutes one of the major challenges in Ethiopia. Most of the educational curriculum is oriented towards the use of the eyesight. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the situations of challenges faced by blind/visually impaired students due to the exclusion of mathematics education. The study employed a qualitative research approach and purposive sampling technique. From 25 participants 15 of them participated in an interview and 10 participated in focus group discussion guided by semi-structured instruments. Interviews focus group discussion and the key informant interview was employed to get relevant and sufficient data. Accordingly, the thematic data analysis procedure delineated was used. The study was carried out at Sidist kilo campus in Addis Ababa University. Multifaceted challenges encountered by blind/visual impaired students due to the exclusion of math education. Individual's attitudinal or institutional barriers, the existing exclusive curriculum and the use of assistive technology could be an impediment to learn mathematics and its related fields. The result confirmed that the majority of the participants revealed that due to the exclusion of learning mathematics, they are encountered with marginalization from different fields at the university. Ministry of education, the regional educational bureau, schools, and teachers will consistently implement a dependable inclusive for mathematics education and provision of necessary support for the needs of blind students in learning mathematics.*

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## 1 Introduction

Mathematics emerges as a critical school subject that determines success in life. From pre-school knowledge about simple calculations is important as a foundation for further education (Agrawal, 2004, Beal and Shaw, 2008). Inclusive education in mathematics is a blueprint regularly which has a scrupulous core on those learners with visual impairment (Buhagiar and Tanti, 2013, Smith and Brayant, 2012; J. Martin et al., 2012). The various studies have revealed the importance of Mathematics for the blind students and it has been very well established that loss of vision does not restrict the learning of Mathematics (Hansen et al., 2010). In contrast to those who believe mathematics requires visualization, various research shows that blind can learn mathematics, not necessarily under the same conditions or with the same teaching methods (Rosenblum and Herzberg, 2015; Rosenblum et al., 2018).

Recent research in the area of accessible Mathematics is geared toward graphing and Mathematics or Science texts in electronic format. As computers have become an invaluable tool in all aspects of life, several researchers have worked on and introduced software that could aid visually impaired and blind students in their learning of Mathematics (Alkhashrami, 2009, and Carole and Penny, 2018, 2018). Moreover, a project developed by Stevens (2003) at the University of York called Math talk has solved difficulties in the learning of Algebra. Sanchez and Flores (2005) for the University of Chile have introduced Audio Math. Software that aimed at enhancing visually impaired students' memory and mathematical skills through audio. All possible alternatives have to be explored for making the teaching and learning in Mathematics more purposeful (Emerson and Anderson, 2018, T. S. Martin and Herrera, 2007).

The integration of students with visual impairment in learning mathematics in school constitutes one of the major challenges in Ethiopia. Most of the educational curriculum is oriented towards the use of the eyesight. This requirement poses paramount challenges to the blind and visually impaired students (Dagnew, 2013; Teshome, 2006; and Tirussew, 2006). Currently, the Ethiopian educational policies and strategies can be considered a reform that aims to address the needs of visually impaired students through inclusive education. However, there are several criticisms of the lack of implementation of this assumption (Asrat, 2013; Dagnew, 2013; Tebeje, 2014; Zelalem, 2018; Zelelew, 2018).

As far as the educational setting is concerned, most of the curriculum presumes that the student has perfect eyesight. Most of the schools, colleges, and universities that are found in Ethiopia have not been providing a mathematics education. With these constraints that the researchers feel that there is a need to carry out a research in inclusive education regarding mathematics education for learners with visual impairment.

## 2 Research problem

Majority of the educational programs in Ethiopian universities like management, accounting, computer science, economics, business, etc, at the college and university level, have excluded the visually impaired learners. This exclusion of students with visual impairments may result in restricting their opportunity to join different fields at the university level (Zelelew, 2018). Although, Schools throughout Ethiopia emphasized instruction in mathematics, consideration for the adaptations needed to ensure inclusion of mathematics education since seven grades for students with visual impairments is hardly ever established since junior level. Due to this exclusion, learners with visual impairment in Ethiopia undergo serious challenges in accessing different opportunities in actual fact, this marginalized the blind students rather than essential zing them learning in the field of the different professions at college and university

### 2.1 Objective

Thus, this study is aimed at identifying the issue of factors/challenges faced by blind/visually impaired students' due to the exclusion of mathematics education with particular reference to sadist kilo campus in Addis Ababa University.

# 3 Research methods

## 3.1 Research design

The research method that was employed during this study was the qualitative research approach. The justification for using the method is that the research study was conducted at a single point in a time and was largely based on subjective interpretation of the participants. As Nick (2010) elaborated, qualitative research tends to be interpretive and seeks to understand a phenomenon in its context in greater depth. Moreover, it seeks to elucidate the nature of social practices, relationships, and beliefs along with the meaning of human experiences from the participant's point of view. Since the major interest of the researcher was to understand challenges faced by blind learners in the exclusion of mathematics education, the qualitative methodology which imparts phenomenological theory was chosen to conduct the research study. Because this qualitative approach allowed the researcher to access the personal experiences of the informants who frame, articulate, and reveals life as experienced in a case structure (Neuman, 2007).

Comprehending the benefits above, the researcher realized that this method is an exploration process to understand the phenomenon in its entirety, rather than just focusing on specific concepts. Hence this research, as a form of case study phenomenological inquiry aimed at capturing the experiences of blind learners. Thus since the study used an exploratory qualitative approach, substantial data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted about the research objectives. Results were illustrated in themes, which were derived from the challenges experienced by blind/visually impaired students due to the exclusion in learning mathematics education.

## 3.2 Sampling technique

The participants were selected using the purposive sampling technique. From these techniques, convenience and purposive techniques were chosen to select the participants. Based on their convenient accessibility and proximity for the study, the convenience technique was used to select 15 participants for the interview, 10 discussants for focus group discussion (FGD), and five key informants were selected. According to Creswell (2014), the sample size of qualitative research is largely determined by theoretical data saturation especially at a point during the data collection stage where new participants do not any longer bring new data or additional insights to the research questions. The participants were selected from Sidist Kilo Campus in Addis Ababa University because it is one of the academic institutions that are practicing inclusion of students with visual impairments and the key informants (special needs professionals) from the ministry of education and sidist kilo campus was selected.

Inclusion Criteria: during the sampling process, the study included 16 male and 9 female blind students' participants from the first, second, third, fourth year, and fifth-year university students.

The researcher employed different data collection instruments to get relevant and sufficient data that were needed in the study. To gain an understanding of the challenges encountered by blind learners due to the exclusion of mathematics education, the researcher conducted qualitative interviews and focus group discussions with a total of 25 blind individuals (9 of females and 16 of males students). Of these, Nineteen of the participants were completely blind and the remaining six had low vision. Only one participant reported having slight difficulty in hearing along with the blindness.

### 3.3 Data collection methods

The first method that the researcher employed was an interview. It was the primary technique used by the researcher to gather data using semi-structured questions. In this research, face to face interview was used as a tool for data collection. Based on the participants' consent, audio recording and note-taking were used in the study session. The interviews were recorded in the "Amharic" language, and were later translated into English. The questions were intentionally kept open-ended to capture the student's real-life academic experiences. Regarding the Key informant interview, (the former blind students who thought inside kilo campus in Addis ababa university, special needs professionals from the ministry of education and sidist kilo university) were chosen to share their views and experiences on the issue and understand their stance in dealing with the problem of exclusion in learning mathematics subject to the blind/visual impaired learners.

The second technique is Focus Group Discussion. Through focus group discussion of the data gathering technique, the researcher planned to obtain relevant qualitative data, which encompasses the discussant attitudes, opinions, and feelings. Selection of participants of FGD was done deliberately by enlisting females and males students who are attending their education at sadist kilo campus in Addis Ababa University. Accordingly, from the total of 25 participants, two focus group discussion sessions were arranged (one group from female's students and one group from male's students). Each comprising five discussants and a total of ten discussants participated. The discussion lasted for one and a half hours. The researcher used a discussion guide which has drawn up from relevant questions geared to obtain richer information. To facilitate the discussions, the researcher employed different communication techniques. These included, probing, clarifying, reflecting, paraphrasing, and summarizing.

The thematic data analysis procedure delineated by (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was used. The data were analyzed by the constant comparison method by referring to qualitative analysis.

## 4 Results

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of the research findings. During the data analysis, the following categories based on the comprehensive themes were presented. These are challenges encountered by visually impaired students due to the exclusion of mathematics education, reasons that hindered for the implementation of inclusive mathematics education, and strategies that can be employed to ensure the realization of inclusion of mathematics education for visually impaired learners. Researcher attempted to reach 15 students for interview, and received a total of 10 responses because of data saturation. Six of the participants were male and the remaining four were female students.

### 4.1 Challenges encountered by blind learners due to the exclusion of Math Subject

The finding confirmed that the participants are experienced different challenges due to the exclusion in learning mathematics education. These include, segregation from participating in different fields at university, individual's attitudinal problems or institutional barriers, and curriculum problems could be an impediment to learn mathematics and its related fields.

P1 is a female student and partially sighted, she was 2nd year special needs education student when I was interviewing to her. She narrated as she followed high school education in a regular school along with sighted peers. She attended Math up to the 10th-grade level. About the way mathematics was taught at high school, she said "I could not benefit enough from my high school education in terms of learning mathematics. There were so many challenges for me". She expressed her experience and dissatisfaction with the mathematics taught in high school. During the course of the interview, she mentioned the detailed challenges. The teachers generally read aloud the text on request. If she missed any information from the teacher's narrative, her peers used to explain it to her.

She explained that besides the traditional teaching method and frequent use of the blackboard for teaching, her teachers also used uncertain directional cues; which created another problem. She added that "she had serious problems in geometry lessons". She reiterated the use of enlarged diagrams while grasping the concepts in Geometry. She also alluded to a home-grown workaround of using a chessboard and a woolen thread to create raised geometry figures. On probing "so you never used tactile graphics", she mentioned the use of "tactile graphics" for understanding graphs and charts. When the teacher would say things like take this and put it here, I did not understand what he meant. She stated that teachers did not have enough information about visually impaired learning materials about mathematics and they were not interested in teaching about us. My classmates' help with mathematical content was no longer enough. I felt like I was not able to learn. I became a disadvantage in learning mathematics.

She clarified that however, she was successful in mathematics and she loved it, the condition forced her to break in learning math since 10 grades. She narrated, not learning mathematics and related subjects at preparatory school restricted her to be involved in the department she wanted to join. As a result, she said, "I was forced to choose to study a field, not because I am interested in it". According to her description, teachers' lack of awareness, lack of interest or motivation by schools to teach blind students in mathematics, lack of supervision, and negligence by the Ministry of Education are all factors that contribute to the challenge. Therefore, the concerned government bodies must work hard to enforce our right to education in all subjects by the constitution of our country.

## 4.2 Participant 2

P2, He was blind from birth and had no visual sight. He was a 5th year law department student when I was interviewed by him. He learned mathematics education till 9th grade. He explains his experience regarding mathematics as follows. He said, when I was in high school, mathematics teachers gave an oral explanation to mathematics problems at hand for the sake of students with visual impairment. They spoke out or explained whatever they wrote or put it on the blackboard so that visually impaired students could follow them. This was true until grade 8. But in the case of grade 9, one of the mathematics teachers for the section the three visually impaired attended, openly refused to say anything in their favor claiming that he had not come to teach the blind and that he did not know how they studied mathematics. This lack of awareness was a serious barrier to him to learn mathematics education at high school.

He suggested that if provided with the right tools and instructions, potentially he can learn math. He narrated, "I wanted to go to university and study management, but I could not perform it because of the lack of mathematics knowledge. Instead, he says, I have to study the field that I do not want". He stated the challenges he faced due to the limitation of mathematics knowledge have been very much restricted him from studying the field he wanted to study. In my opinion, to solve the problem of blind students not being able to learn math, it is important to have a clear understanding of all levels,

including teachers, schools, and policymakers. In addition, it requires proper monitoring to ensure that inclusive education is implemented properly.

## 4.3 Participant 3

P3 said, "I was born in Hawassa and I lost my sight as a 9th-grade student. Due to the unavailability of braille training in my area at the time, I was unable to continue my education. Then, I came to Addis Ababa to get braille training and to continue my education. After taking the Braille training in Yemisrach braille training center in 5 Kilo, I persisted in my interrupted education since 9th grade. And I did well in the 12th grade and went to Sidist Kilo Campus and am now a third-year sociology student. When I was a sighted student, I loved math and related subjects like physics, chemistry and I was successful in all subjects. When I was sighted, I wanted to study physics at a university, but Due to the lack of a suitable education system with related to mathematics and its related fields for the blind in our country, I could not get the education I wanted. Although in our country, some subjects of social science are reachable in the inclusive education system at university, most of them are not allowed to blind students.

When I asked the participant about his high school education, he shared it with me. According to him, I personally applied for a school permit to study math and related subjects, but I was unable to do so because neither the school principal nor the teachers refused to teach me. School officials and teachers told me that because of the lack of curriculum, assistive technologies, and trained teachers, they could not teach math and math to blind students. This indicates that due to the country's limited focus on education for blind students; it has not been possible to expand educational opportunities for blind students. In my opinion, this problem is not caused by the incompetence of blind students, but by the problem of consciousness or the attenuation problem of the concerned bodies. Therefore, to solve the challenges I have mentioned above, blind students must primarily demand and enforce their rights. This is because our constitution gives us the right to education without discrimination.

## 4.4 Participant 4

P4 has been blind since the age of 22. When I asked him to describe his past experience, he responded insightfully. When he was a third-year student at Arat Kilo Campus, he lost his eyes and was totally blind. He pronounced "I was able to see and I had no sight problem until third-year university). Although I have math skills and I want to continue my studies in engineering, the university did not allow me to do so, so I was forced to interrupt my education and compelled to be involved in another social field. To continue my education in another field, I need to have Braille knowledge. So, I took Brailleskill training at Yemsrach center in Addis Ababa. After a year of braille training, I have re-entered in law school and continued my study in the law field at sidist Kilo campus.

When he narrated his story, to continue his new field in the law department, he faced some challenges because he was a natural science student. He said, "I had a hard time in studying law because I didn't have much knowledge of social studies. After many struggles, I was able to overcome the problem I encountered in the new department". He said that although I did not have the same math problems and experiences as other blind students, I believed math was important for the blind. In my opinion, if math education is properly started from the bottom, other junior blind students may not have the same problem as senior blind learners faced.

### 4.5 Participant 5

P5 narrated her story as follows. She has been completely blind after birth. She was a third-year social work student. She received primary education till six grades at Sebeta blind school. From ninth grade to twelfth grade onwards she had followed her education at Sebeta elementary school, a high-school and preparatory school in a regular school with sighted peers. She learned math up to sixth grade. In the context of Math, she mentioned that, till 6$^{th}$ grade, she had thought of basic arithmetic concepts. At the blind school, in the very beginning, she was able to learn math's using Braille. She said, since seventh grade, the school system did not allow blind students to learn math subjects, which resulted in the discontinuation of learning math subjects. However, she stated, to satisfy her curiosity or desire to know, learning mathematics would be the means for satisfying her desire.

When she described her experience, she said she wanted to learn mathematics during his elementary, but was unable to do so because the school system did not allow blind students to teach mathematics.

She narrated that while "I wanted to study economics, the department did not allow me to involve in the field because of the existence of certain math content in the economics course". She pronounced that it is a known lack of awareness in our country's universities, but it is well known that blind students in other parts of the world can drop math-related courses and be involved in different departments during their stay at the university. She further revealed that however, Universities that are found in our country do not allow blind students to involve in different fields except in certain fields unless they are required mathematics concepts. All of these challenges are caused by a lack of awareness at both schools and universities.

## 5 Reasons that hindered for the implementation of inclusive mathematics education for blind/visual impaired students

Majority of the participants identified various factors that can be the reason for the exclusion of students with visual impairment in the learning process of mathematics. They also pronounced that lack of awareness concerning the capacity in the study of mathematics by students with visual impairment, ignorance of the existence of inclusive curriculum, special assistive devices, and mathematics learning materials for the blind, etc. is likely to have contributed reasons in the exclusion of Students' with a visual impairment from the learning process of mathematics.

### 5.1 Participant 1

P1: She was a third-year sociology student. She is completely blind since the age of 12. After losing her sight due to glaucoma, she had to shift to a blind school, where she learned Braille. She studied Math till 6$^{th}$ grade only. She specifically mentioned that the blind school officials did not allow her to take up Math beyond 6$^{th}$ grade. As a result, throughout her high school education, she was compelled to interrupt in learning Math. She pronounced that reason for the exclusion of learning math for the blind might be lack of awareness, teachers' lack of pre-knowledge and ignorance of the existence of curriculum and special assistive devices and mathematics learning materials, etc is likely to have contributed factors in the exclusion of students with a visual impairment from the learning process of mathematics.

In the sociology department where I am studying, a statistic and quantitative research course are offered. The courses I mentioned above require mathematics. As a result, we cannot take these courses. Therefore, when we want to do research, we have to ask for help from students who are able to see.

She describes, as sighted students, we blind students can learn mathematics subjects if we have all the necessary learning materials are available. However, education policy enforcement, school-based problems, teacher attitudes, and cultural influences prevent blind students from learning math. She added that Mathematics teachers do not know about the special abacus for us, the Braille alphabet, or how to use these effectively in mathematics lessons. She said, it is possible to take advantage of different opportunities by enrolling blind students in mathematics to involve them in different departments of the university.

## 5.2 Participant 2

P2 was a 2nd-year political science department student. He was partially sighted. He stated his perception about the exclusion of learning mathematics, limits his involvement in different fields in diverse departments he can involve. He viewed reason for the exclusion of learning mathematics education can be realized in various ways. Like, Teacher training institutions, usually, do not give supplementary or complimentary training to teachers for teaching students with visual impairment and the institutions themselves may not have the information or knowledge as to how students with visual impairment could be taught. He added that math teachers have some prejudice about how to give inclusive education in math lessons for the blind. He said when I was an eighth-grade student; the mathematics teacher told me that visually impaired students cannot learn mathematics. He narrated I utterly do not agree with this idea. Because of the special equipment or assistive devices for learning is facilitated can learn mathematics. He explained that his teacher tried to ignore him and did not care about his attainment in learning mathematics. He added that teachers' limited awareness in teaching mathematics to address the individual needs of blind students had negative consequences to learn mathematics. He described, Although, mathematics subject is more vital for visually impaired learners to support them in all academic areas at college and university level, individuals' attitudinal problem or institutional barriers that could be an obstruction to learn mathematics and other related fields as their sighted peers. According to his remark, to solve the problem from the bottom up, the schools and universities system have a preference that the visually impaired students should exempt any visual-based portion from learning including mathematics and different fields. Majority of the participants confirmed that as they have an interest to learn mathematics, individuals' attitudinal problems or institutional barriers that could be an obstruction to learn mathematics and other related fields as their sighted peers.

## 5.3 Participant 3

P3 was a 2nd year English department student. She was partially sighted from birth. Her sight rate was very limited. She was living with her parents. She was attended her primary and secondary school in the regular school with sighted peers. She did not know about the Braille writing and reading style. There is no special training center to learn braille. Therefore, she can attend her education by recording using a tape recorder when she was in elementary and high school. She illustrated at the time, she can use the computer for her educational purpose at university. She actually attended mathematics to neither an elementary nor a middle school. As a result, she is imposed to depend on others sighted persons in matters involving mathematical operations. She expressed her views

on mathematics as, although her opinion on the inclusive education regarding mathematics was generally positive, she expressed her concern about the way mathematics was taught at elementary and high school, "I could not benefit enough from my high school education in terms of learning mathematics. There were so many challenges for me".

She narrated her views, Some of The Challenges of this sidist Kilo University where I study is that all blind students are taught in limited departments and we are often assigned to a specific department. This situation makes it difficult for us to find students who can read and help us. In addition, during the exam time, we also find it difficult to find examiners. She said, in my opinion, all of this could have been avoided if blind students could have entered different departments in the university. This can only happen if, according to university law, blind students can learn math since elementary school. In fact, in the other world, only blind students are taught a course that they can learn. However, the university leaders of this country do not allow us to study mathematics-related fields in general because they have lack of awareness.

## 5.4 Participant 4

P4 was a late blind, and participated in the interview when He was a second-year law department student. He elucidated his history, "I was blind to the pain I experienced when I was in the 12th grade. I was a natural science student before I lost my sight. As only blind students can involve in the social science field, I started school again by reviewing since ninth grade. Although I had a background in mathematics, I could not continue my studies in natural sciences, because I was not allowed to study at a university in the field of natural sciences. As a result, I was forced to study law in the social sciences". Before entering the law department, I applied to aart kilo campus to study computer science. But because of my blindness, the university was not willing to accept me. As a result, I was forced to continue my law studies at sides Kilo Campus.

He clarified his observation when he was a high school student, the school could be ignorant of the needed special equipment or assistive devices for teaching mathematics to students with visual impairment. He narrated; complacency on the part of students with visual impairment for being exempted from learning mathematics might have contributed to their exclusion from being taught mathematics. According to his explanation, failure by the authorities responsible for education to take steps to include students with visual impairment in the learning process of mathematics and other subjects involving aspects of mathematics may be another factor for such exclusion. Therefore to solve this problem, government intervention, especially the Ministry of Education, must work hard for the implementation of mathematics education in an inclusive manner to the blind.

## 5.5 Participant 5

P5 is a blind lecturer at a university. He is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Social Work. He holds his first degree in sociology and is taught in the same profession. He pronounced, even though, I wanted to continue my master's degree in sociology, but the Department of Sociology at sides Kilo University did not allow blind students to study, so I had to pursue my master's and Ph.D. studies in the Social Work department. The department's reason for not accepting blind students is that some courses require mathematics and blind students do not know math. I was forced to join the Social Work Department because of the limitation of my math knowledge. Such an experience is a problem not only for me but also for most blind students.

He said, in my opinion, blind students are not allowed to study mathematics, not because they cannot learn math, but because the education system in our country is not inclusive.

He explained his views as Schools' motivation to make blind students learn math, teachers' awareness, curriculum problems, and other related challenges prevent blind students from learning math in the inclusive education system. To solve this problem, he the relevant bodies, for example, the Ministry of Education, the education system developers must pay attention and work hard. Therefore, to solve such problems, if blind students are taught math and related subjects from elementary school, mathematical challenges can be avoided.

The results indicate that education policy enforcement, school-based problems, teacher attitudes, and cultural influences prevent blind students from learning math. Majority of the participants revealed that failure by the authorities responsible for education to take steps to include students with visual impairment in the learning process of mathematics and other subjects involving aspects of mathematics may be another factor for such exclusion. Special needs professionals who participated in the interview revealed that attitudinal and Cultural obstacles are related to blind students' weak motivation to study math. They also argue that a lack of awareness regarding the capacity of persons with visual impairment in learning mathematics on the part of curriculum developers could be another problem or barrier, especially at higher levels. They highlight creating special curricula for blind students in primary, preparatory, and secondary stages.

They gave their insight that blind students need an integrated math's curriculum that observes their special conditions. Such as providing physical objects, models, mathematical language, and comprehensive communication tools for math, as well as integrating other systems - like Braille - for mathematical symbols. The interviewees also articulated, Teacher training institutions, usually, do not give supplementary or complementary training to mathematics teachers and the institutions themselves may not have the information or knowledge as to how students with visual impairment could be taught.

They gave their perception of the failure by the Ministry of Education and Regional Education offices to take the initiative of addressing the barriers that are adversely affecting students with visual impairment with respect including them in the learning process of mathematics; schools at all levels may not be motivated to address such barriers. Maybe, students with visual impairment have not done enough, or even have failed in fighting for inclusion in the learning process of mathematics and this may be a factor that has kept schools and institutions from taking the necessary measures to rectify the existing discrepancy. They verified the launching of mathematics, as planned to be opened, it covers a full range of assistive and mainstream education that enables a student with a visual disability to enjoy an inclusive education. They point out that blind students can study and understand significant elements of Mathematics. Besides, they also pronounced complacency on the part of students with visual impairment for being exempted from learning mathematics and related fields might have contributed to their exclusion from being taught mathematics. They verified that failure by the authorities responsible for education to take steps to include students with visual impairment in the learning process of mathematics subjects may be another factor for such exclusion.

## 6 Discussion

The finding revealed that there are several future concerns the participants experienced due to the exclusion of math education. These include, individual's attitudinal problem or institutional blockades, curriculum barriers, and use of assistive technology could be an impediment to learn mathematics and mathematics-related fields. Each of the problems identified by participants due to the exclusion of mathematics education is linked to others challenges, either as a contributing factor to involve in different fields at university. Research conducted by Orsini-Jones (2009) has shown that blind university students face a variety of challenges during their studies.

FGD discussant also reported that blind/visually impaired learners have no chance to learn mathematics subjects, Because of a lack of awareness of issues related to vision impairment. The finding also confirmed that as they have the interest to learn mathematics, individuals' attitudinal problems or institutional barriers that could be an obstruction to learn mathematics and other related fields as their sighted peers. This finding was supported by Bader (2006); Brawand et al. (2015) who confirmed that the exclusion of learners with visual impairment in mathematics education could be an obstruction to succeed their education less likely than their sighted classmates.

The study signified that the participants gave their insight that mathematics subject is more vital for visually impaired learners to support them in all academic areas at the university level. Most of the opinions reported by interviewees and discussants pronounced that a thorough understanding of mathematics enhances educational and occupational opportunities for all blind/visual impaired people. They revealed that there are likely to be students with visual impairment that are naturally gifted in mathematics and as such if they are given the chance of learning this subject, they could have the opportunity of pursuing an alternative field of professional career. According to their expression math's subject can apply current technical concepts and practice in the core area of mathematics.

Some of the participants describe, as sighted students, they can learn mathematics subjects if the necessary learning materials are available. According to a study conducted by Sanchez and Flores (2005), blind students can easily learn math with the help of various assistive technology. They validated in their study, if blind students they were allowed to study mathematics, they would be able to learn math like other sighted students. The finding also supported by the study conducted by the works of Agrawal (2004); T. S. Martin and Herrera (2007); Beal and Shaw (2008); Giesen et al. (2012) who demonstrated that if provided with the right tools and instructions, potentially every blind student can appropriately learn math. The finding from special needs professionals verified that the launching of mathematics education has the potential to facilitate the inclusion of students with visual impairments. Researchers such as Beal and Shaw (2008) affirmed in their research, if provided with the right tools and instructions, potentially every blind student can be engaged in a Mathematical task.

## 7 Conclusions

The study intended to explore challenges that visually impaired students encounter with various difficulties due to the exclusion of mathematics subjects. In this research study 25, blind/visually impaired students and five key informants participated. The findings of this study exemplify the multifaceted challenges encountered by blind/visual impaired students due to the exclusion of math education, limits the fields of study they can pursue from participating in different fields at university. The result confirmed that the majority of the participants gave their perception that mathematics is a key enabler for the right to an inclusive education and support in all academic areas as well as in expanding other professions.

About the perception of visually impaired learners towards mathematics education, the findings showed that students with visual impairment agreed that mathematics education is more essential for visually impaired learners to support them in all academic areas at the university level. If they are given the chance of learning this subject, they could have the opportunity of pursuing an alternative field of professional career and practice in the core area of mathematics. Hence, learning mathematics is an important input for persons with visual impairment. As sighted students, learners with visual impairment may desire to have knowledge or wish to know the concept of any discipline or subject. So, to satisfy their curiosity or desire to know, learning mathematics would be the means for satisfying such desire or wish.

The key informants demonstrated that the launching of mathematics education for blind/visual impaired learners has the potential to facilitate the inclusion of students with visual impairments in different fields at the college and university level. It is consultable from this datum that their perception about mathematics learning in the academic sphere was very significant for visually impaired learners. So the researcher recommends that the concerned body like the ministry of education, schools, etc. should give an acute attention to the subject of mathematics to make it inclusive for the blind at primary school would be part of their focusing area.

## 8 Recommendations

Based on the findings from the research study, the following recommendations are forwarded:

1. Ministry of education, schools, etc take action like adapting curriculum, arranging necessary materials to make inclusive mathematics for visually impaired learners.
2. Advocacy and policy issues should be instituted for the benefit of visually impaired students regarding mathematics;
3. Involving well-qualified special needs experts in the development of the curriculum is likely to be useful in the developing process.
4. Acquainting adaptive technology products and making such products easily available at affordable prices to the users.

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## Data Availability

Data can be made available on the behavior of the request

## Declaration of interests' statement

The author declare no competing interests.

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## Research Original Article

# Inclusive early childhood education in Ethiopia by case showing: opportunities and challenges

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## Abstract

*The main purpose of this study was to explore an inclusive early childhood education in Ethiopia with respect to O-class. A case study design was employed to achieve the study's goals. Parents, O-class teachers, school administrators, special needs experts, and early childhood care and education specialists took part in the study purposefully and comprehensively selected. Interview, focus group discussion, and observation were used to collect data and were analyzed thematically. Results: The O-class was the new practice in the education system of the country to be taken as opportunity. Lack of teachers with the necessary training, funding, resources and facilities, parent's awareness and participation, parent-teacher networking, and up to the standard early childhood care and education programs were reported as challenges. The practice of an in inclusive O-class mainly for children with disabilities has to be celebrated that the children were all in all denied the right to education in these schools in recent years back; it is being challenged by several factors though. The government should employ O-class teachers who have received the appropriate training and allot a sufficient budget to meet the needs of children with and without disabilities in these schools.*

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## 1 Introduction

Most African nations, even those with higher levels of economic development implement Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in an unstructured manner, which causes children to lack social-emotional development in their skills, abilities, attitudes toward others, and negligence in social environments (Amnon and Hyder, 2015; Bietenbeck et al., 2019). This leads to the unconsolidated and unorganized social and emotional development of children, which in turn impacts the social, economic, cultural, and political aspects of a country (Mwamwenda, 2014; Richter et al., 2017).

Little attention has been paid in practice though Ethiopia's comprehensive education strategy acknowledges the value of pre-school education by setting the objective of the child's overall development in preparation for formal schooling (Ministry of Education, 1994). The Ethiopian government created a national policy framework for ECCE as a result, claiming that "it is during the early years that children learn and acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes swiftly and with minimal effort" (Ministry of Education, 2010a, p. 18). Studies (e.g. Yalew, 2011; Teferra et al., 2018; Woldehanna, 2016) have stated that various government regulations are in place to execute ECCE at the national level, but in practice,

it is very difficult for Regional, Zonal, or District Educational Bureaus and stakeholders to reach all children in their environmental contexts in an acceptable and accessible way.

Ministry of Education (2015) states that kindergarten O-classes and child-to-child programs are included in ECCE, also known as pre-school education. In the child-to-child program, older siblings or sisters instruct their younger siblings in the basics of letter formation. A program that gets children ready for primary school who did not get to go to kindergarten or other pre-school programs. The O-class is among the most popular local government answers for children who did not get the chance to participate in kindergarten programs (Ministry of Education, 2015).

According to the Ministry of Education (2015), even if gross enrollment (GR) has improved in years, it is still insignificant. Thus, it is with this intention the current study was carried out to investigate the opportunities and challenges of implementing an inclusive O-class at Durame Town Administration to get insights about early inclusive education in Ethiopia.

Besides, all over the world, countries, governments, researchers, educators, NGOs, stakeholders, and parents are striving to ensure inclusive education and society for all irrespective of differences in disability, religion, sex, ethnic, color, religion, culture, geographical location, and the list is hectic (Ackerman, 2004; Amnon and Hyder, 2015; Gaffar and Campbell, 2021; Labuschagne, 2015; Tumen et al., 2021). However, these efforts and aspirations seem to be far from a reality to majority of the countries especially in the global south. Specifically, Ethiopia though for so long is hardly working to ensure inclusive education and is witnessing changes in this regard, but significant number children with special needs are out of the education circle (Gebregziabher, 2014; Ministry of Education, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2016a; **tefera2018**; Woldehanna, 2016; Yalew, 2011; Yigzaw and Abdirahman, 2017). The country particularly is working hard recently on early childhood care and education and quite lately on O-classes. However, there is gap of research reports how these schools are inclusive. Thus, the reports of the current research would be an informative one for policy makers, researchers, and stakeholders in the area internationally and locally.

## 2 Research problem

Ethiopia has made great progress over the past 20 years in the field of education. Expanding access to education at all levels of the educational system was a priority of the Ethiopian government. The nation took significant steps to meet the goals established by the 1990 and 2000 World Summits on EFA, UN Agenda for Sustainable Development, Education 2030 Incheon Declaration, and Framework for Action (**unesco2015**; Teferra et al., 2018; Woldehanna, 2016). Consequently, primary education is now widely accessible throughout the nation. For instance, the country's Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) for Primary Education was 102.7%, and the Net Enrollment Rate (NER), was 94.3% respectively (Ministry of Education, 2016a).

This shows that the nation has made significant progress, particularly in ensuring equity at this level and in ensuring that all primary school students have access to education. When it comes to growing preschool programs, the nation's average GER was higher than the Sub-Saharan African (SSA) average, but it still lagged behind several other African nations like Ghana (115.1%), South Africa (76.17%), and Kenya (73.79%). It is also responsible for GER global vengeance. While The SSA average was 21.87%, the global average was 44.04%. (World Bank Group, 2016). In this regard, the GER for Pre-school education in the nation was only 34.0% according to the Educational Statistics Annual Abstract of 2013/2014 (Ministry of Education, 2016b).

The National Policy Framework and other study findings have made it abundantly evident that pre-school education programs are crucial for children's future harmonious development in particular and for their social, cultural, and economic growth in general (Lemma, 2014). Additionally, the National Policy Framework views the ECCE program as an essential tool for improving primary school enrollment on an equal basis, productivity growth, cost savings for both families and the country, poverty reduction, minimizing gender disparity, increasing opportunities for parental and community mobilization and empowerment, and protecting children's rights (Ethiopian ECCE Policy Framework, 2010).

Practically, in terms of addressing the needs of the growing population of preschool-age children with and without disabilities, pre-school education programs are only partially provided. The GER of Pre-school in 2004 was 2%, the lowest among African nations. Ministry of Education (2006) the number rose to 2.3%, and by 2010/2011, it reached 5.4% (Ministry of Education, 2016b), but it was very difficult to put out here quite recent data. However, over the past years, there has been an increase interest in expanding pre-school education across the nation as a result of issues with primary school quality on the one hand and the requirement to implement children's educational rights outlined in the World Summits on the other.

In particular, USAID (2010) findings on the academic performance of grade 2 and grade 3 students nationwide urged the nation to reconsider the issue and act immediately to address it. The problem with South Nations and Nationalities Peoples Regional State (SNNPR) of the country is more significant (USAID, 2010). The primary contributing element was identified as a lack of pre-school education. Since then, O-classes have been introduced in primary schools and other public settings (**moe2016**). In addition, a diploma-level program for preparing pre-school teachers was introduced in College Teacher Education (CTEs). Consequently, enrollment has increased somewhat. The GER grew in SNNPR, rising from 3.9 in 2006/2007 to 47.7% in 2015 (SNNPR Education Bureau, 2015).

The GER of SNNPR, on the other hand, was 3.0 and increased to 57.0% in 2015, according to data from the MoE Annual Abstract (2006-2007), yet it was difficult to provide here a recent data that we are unable to get. Despite the discrepancy between national and regional figures, both data showed that pre-school enrollment in the region is increasing. However, there are huge problems with the availability of access, maintaining equity, and guaranteeing the quality of education for all students in the area (Gebregziabher, 2014; Ministry of Education, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2016a; Teferra et al., 2018; Woldehanna, 2016; Yalew, 2011; Yigzaw and Abdirahman, 2017). Despite a relative expansion, the region's educational opportunities still fall short for over 50% of pre-school children.

In the Durame Town Administration, there are 12 public and 8 private pre- and primary schools respectively that accept children with and without disabilities (CwWODs). Irrespective of their disability, social, ethnic, or economic background, children are expected to have equal opportunities to engage in school without any discrimination in the Kembata Tembero Zone or throughout Ethiopia. Therefore, as there are scarcity of previous studies on the issue raised, and particularly in the study area, it was found to be a justifiable pulling factor to conduct a study on whether the country's aspirations to have an early inclusive O-class is going well as planned by taking the case of Durame Town. To meet the objectives of this study the following

1. How are the school physical environments accessible for children with and without disabilities attending O-class?
2. Is there skilled human power assigned for O-class?
3. How are teaching and learning materials necessary for O-class children with and without disabilities and teachers?

4. How are parents of children with and without disabilities participating in the implementation of an inclusive O-class?

## 3 Literature review

The equipment in a room and its arrangement can affect the behavior of learners and give them cues or messages to act on. To provide learners with adequate stimulation, the learning environment needs to be developmentally appropriate with a variety of apparatuses. A safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment that provides for differences in learners' ages, abilities, and developmental levels is crucial for achieving maximum stimulation. Both indoor and outdoor environments play an important role in stimulating learners according to their developmental needs (Marotz, 2009 as cited in Labuschagne, 2015; Bietenbeck et al., 2019).

The strategic guidelines of the Ministry of Education (2010b) stated that learning environments in pre-schools should have a wide variety of stimulating play and learning materials that promote not only simple but also higher thought processes, such as puzzles, riddles, guessing games, stories, fairy tales, and visually rich in color. The pre-school classroom should be organized into interest areas or centers filled with a variety of materials and equipment including blocks, dramatic play supplies, science activities, books, and art supplies. Children must have the time to experiment with measuring, counting, pouring, and making predictions using available indoor materials. Papers, scissors, markers, puzzles, and other hands-on-materials that foster children's thinking and problem-solving skills should be readily available. Outdoor spaces should contribute to physical, intellectual, creative, emotional, and social development and offer a variety of stimulation for play and exploration. Ministry of Education (2010b) also stated in a strategic document that outdoor play equipment must be well maintained, clean, and developmentally appropriate, which can provide ample opportunities for the creativity and development of different skills.

Play equipment for outdoor as suggested by Jackman (2001) include: permanent and take-apart climbers, sturdy wooden crates and barrels, railroad ties surrounding sandbox, tire swings with holes punched in several places for drainage, slides, inner tubes, balance beam, tricycles, wagons, other wheeled toys, plastic hoops, chimneys, rubber balls of various sizes, mounted steering wheel, sturdy cardboard boxes, etc., can be used in a pre-school setting. The teacher should think creatively of new ways to bring indoor activities outside and outdoor activities inside, while at the same time keeping in mind the skills to be developed. Safety is the primary priority in outdoor play.

The most appropriate materials for inclusion in a classroom are open-ended materials that can be used for multiple purposes. Manipulative materials that may be put together in many different ways and incorporated into other activities are a good example of open-ended, multiple-use material (Miller, 1996 as cited in Gebregziabher, 2014; Gaffar and Campbell, 2021). Books should be available to be "read" by children individually, in pairs, and in small groups. Books should also be available for teachers to read to children. In addition to regular books, stories on tape, films, and movies provide alternative modes for children who do not attend regular books.

Jamil (2019) confirmed that educators should be guided by a curriculum framework based on the child development theory. Not doing so could lead to inappropriate practices in children's classrooms as well as decisions that could be harmful to children. A well-planned and coordinated curriculum is crucial. Therefore, it helps promote quality service across age groups of students, support professional staff in their practice, facilitate communication between staff and parents and ensure pedagogical continuity between pre-school and primary school (Sosina, 2013).

According to Orkin et al. (2012), the national ECCE curriculum and national grade 1 curriculum do not align. The national ECCE curriculum envisions play-based, mother tongue ECCE instruction. By contrast, the national grade 1 curriculum is more academic and teacher-centered. This disjunction creates a difficult transition for children moving from pre-school to grade 1.

Ministry of Education (2010b) strategic document also stated that clearly states that pre-school teachers should hold a 10-month pre-school teacher training course certificate from the Teacher Education Institute or have attended a 2-month course to upgrade their skills and knowledge, especially in the field of active learning of young children (Ministry of Education, 2010b; Teferra et al., 2018; Woldehanna, 2016; Yalew, 2011; Yigzaw and Abdirahman, 2017).

# 4 Research Methods

## 4.1 Research design

A case study design which was an instrumental case study was used in this study. This research design was selected because it offers the opportunity to extend the in-depth understanding of participants engaged in certain phenomena (Creswell et al., 2013). It is a scientific investigation that tries to provide a pictorial account of an event, behavior, or situation (Creswell, 2007). Thus, this design helped to see the selected four schools in holistic manners in terms of their inclusiveness to CWDs as these schools were the only schools having an attendance of CWDs, therefore the insights from these schools would be instrumental to all concerned in early inclusive education in the country. Thus, a qualitative research method was used, meaning qualitative data focus on establishing patterns all about exploring issues; understanding phenomena (Nicholas and Walliman, 2018) helped to gaining insight in our case CwWODs in 0-class setting.

## 4.2 Sample and sampling technique

According to Durane Town Administration's Education Office reports (2014), there are 12 governmental and 8 private primary schools that provide O-class, totaling 20. Therefore the number of school principals, teachers, ECCE experts, special needs experts, and parents in these 20 O-classes were 20, 30, 2, 8, 240 respectively. However, from these 20 schools only 4 schools (government schools) were having/teaching CWDs. Therefore, the criteria for selecting these 4 schools were attendance of CWDs. All these four O-classes accommodate 240 students without disabilities and 6 students with different types of disabilities (four students with physical impairment, one student with hearing impairment, and one student with partial visual impairment). Yet, it should be conceived that those students labeled without disabilities may and may not have invisible disabilities (e.g. heart attack, asthma, different disease types any way).

To select 4 principals comprehensive sampling technique was used that no criteria was needed as the principals must have been participated to give data about their schools. From the 2 ECCE experts, 1 was selected to participate in the study purposively, the criteria was work experience that the unselected expert was having only one year experience. To select 6 teachers from 30 teachers purposive sampling technique was used.

Two criteria were used namely sex (only females) and teaching experience (years of teaching experience), to select 20 parents from 240 purposive sampling technique was used

using being a mother of a child with disability and school networking experience as a criteria. Those net-worked parents with the schools were selected.

## 4.3 Data collection instruments

Three types of data collection instruments were used. Interviews, Observation, and focus group discussions (FGD) were used to collect data. They were developed by the current researchers from the comprehensive literature reviewed for the study. Two types of the interview, structured and semi-structured were used. The interview sections included topics not limited to: Background information of all interviewees, issues related to instruction and curriculum, materials and facilities, social and physical inclusion, parental involvement, and challenges and opportunities of inclusion in the schools. Interview sessions were audiotaped (using an IC recorder) with the participants' permission to fully capture their opinions on the issues. Every interview session lasted between 40' and an hour.

The observations were made in the O-class classrooms to examine the school's physical environments and the process of the teaching-learning process, whether they are conducive for CWWODs attending O-class, were made twice in each schools using 20-item checklists. The observation items include not limited to: Background of the school, curriculum/syllabus and guideline documents, physical environments (play fields, toilet, first aids kits, marry-go-round play machine, and balls), and classroom psychological and physical environments of the schools.

FGD, is highly suitable for knowledge because it focuses on the feelings, thoughts, perceptions, sensitive matters, experiences, and knowledge of the research participants (Tumen et al., 2021). Four FGD, with a total of 20 participants, were included in the study. In each group, five parents participated in discussions. During the discussion, the participants used both Amharic and the local language kembatisa and translated them back into English. The discussion was recorded using IC records and notes. Each discussion lasted for 1 hour. The FGD items covered topics not limited to: Knowledge about O-class, inclusion opportunities and challenges in the schools, stake holder involvement, and accessibility of environments of the schools.

## 4.4 Methods of data analysis

The data collected through the tools listed above were organized, described, conceptualized, classified, and categorized based on the research questions raised at the beginning of the study and were analyzed through manual techniques. Thematic analysis was used to present the findings.

## 4.5 Ethical considerations

Regarding ethics, Creswell (2007) suggests that any researcher should be careful not to harm even a single participant during attempts to dig deeper data. Therefore, consent, anonymity, and confidentiality measures were taken, and the findings were made only for the academic purposes.

# 5 Results

Table 1: Teacher characteristics

| Item | Category | Frequency (F) | Percent (100%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sex | Female | 6 | 100 |
| | Male | 0 | 0 |
| | Total | 6 | 100 |
| Age | 20 to 30 years | 3 | 50 |
| | 31 to 40 years | 2 | 33.3 |
| | 41 above years | 1 | 16.7 |
| | Total | 6 | 100 |
| Educational background | Certificate | 5 | 83.3 |
| | Diploma | 1 | 16.7 |
| | Degree | 0 | 0 |
| | Total | 6 | 100 |
| Work experience | 0 to 10 | 3 | 50 |
| | 11 to 20 | 2 | 33.3 |
| | 21 and above | 1 | 16.7 |
| | Total | 6 | 100 |

As indicated in Table 1, all the 6 (100%) teachers were female. Showing the assignment of these teachers in O-class is in line with the standard of pre-primary education is preferable to be females that they will be having motherly caring and loving nature. The teachers 5 (83%) sampled have certificates, with only 1 (17%) diploma and no degree holder. This means the education level of teachers is not up to standard (that they are also grade 10 complete). The minimum standard of Ministry of Education (2010b) states that preschool teachers' education level has to be at least diploma certificate.

Table 2: School principals' characteristics

| Item | Category | Frequency (F) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sex | Female | 1 | 25 |
| | Male | 3 | 75 |
| | Total | 4 | 100 |
| Educational Background | Diploma | 0 | 0 |
| | Degree | 4 | 100 |
| | Masters | 0 | 0 |
| | Total | 4 | 100 |
| Experiences in school leadership | 0 to 10 | 3 | 75 |
| | 11 to 20 | 1 | 25 |
| | 21 and above | 0 | 0 |
| | Total | 4 | 100 |

As Table 2 indicates that educational background of school principals' all of them 4 (100%) are degree holders and 3 (75%) of the principals are having below 10 years work experience. It is possible to infer that the principal leadership role in O-classes may not be sufficient.

Table 3: ECCE experts and special need experts characteristics

| Item | Category | Frequency (F) | Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sex | Female | 4 | 66.6 |
| | Male | 2 | 33.3 |
| | Total | 6 | 100 |
| Educational background | Diploma | 1 | 33.3 |
| | Degree | 1 | 33.3 |
| | Masters | 1 | 33.3 |
| Working experience | 1 to 5 | 1 | 33.3 |
| | 6 to 10 | 1 | 33.3 |
| | 11 and above | 1 | 33.3 |

As indicated in Table 3, ECCE experts and special need experts education levels seem to be good except for their minimal work experience which was found to be below five years. Thus, their expertise and consultative power might not be as helpful and powerful as they work with O-class teachers and principals.

Table 4: CWDS characteristics

| Item | Category | Frequency (F) | Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sex | Female | 6 | 100 |
| | Male | – | – |
| | Total | 6 | 100 |
| Disability Type | Physical impairment | 4 | 66.66 |
| | Hearing impairment | 1 | 16.67 |
| | Visual Impairment | 1 | 16.67 |
| Age | 8 | 4 | 66.66 |
| | 7 | 1 | 16.67 |
| | 6 | 1 | 16.67 |

As can be seen in Table 4, CWDS attending in the O-class most 6 (100%) were males, which may indicate to some extent, female children are not coming to the schools. Besides, the majority 4 (66.66%) of the CWDS in the O-class were beyond the expected age of pre-school that they are 8 years old. In Ethiopia, age 8 is the time for the child to be in grade 2 in primary school.

## 5.1 Entry age of CwwoDs Attending O-Class

The Durame Town Administration Education Office has pointed out that children in different age groups attend O-classes in government primary schools. For instance, 63% of children attending O-class in 2022 were 6 years old, 20% were 4 years old, 15% were 5 years old and the remaining 2% were 7 years old.

Primary school principals and O-class teachers expressed children are expected to attend classes at the age of 3 and 4 years. However, as found in this study, children at age six were found to be new entrants, just a year before joining primary school, which is too late to receive benefits from an O-class inclusion. The worrying point is, in the interview with teachers teaching in O-class and the principals it was crystal clear that there were a considerable number of children aged 7 and 8 years. Answering the question as to why the schools were admitting students at and above six years old at the beginning of the school year, the school directors and O-class teachers revealed that, "They were

admitting children above six years old to O-class due to high pressure and demand from parents." They also associated the admission of children under and above six years old to the O-class with their right to access education. The researcher probed whether these students were grouped based on their age (ages:- 4-5, 5-6, 6-7, and 7-8) and learned in different classrooms accordingly. One of the school's principals reported:

Owing to a lack of classroom space and qualified O-class teachers, all age groups of CWwODs in this school were learning together in one classroom. Additionally, the Durame Town administration does not provide the necessary support to address student needs in a variety of ways that would not allow the school to accept all sorts of children in accordance with the inclusive education policy (School Principal 2 (SP2))

Admitting children in different age groups to O-class is not in line with the Strategic Operational Plan and Guidelines for ECCE (2010b), which states that O-class is initiated principally to create access to education for those children who are disadvantaged and did not receive three years of pre-school education at six years of age.

It is impossible to meet the developmental needs of children in various age groups by teaching them in the same classrooms with the same educational resources and teaching techniques. Categorizing and teaching children of different age groups in the same classroom may cause negative effects such as high dropout rates, poor academic performance and development, and display undesirable behaviors in school and/or at home. One expert on special needs said,

Schools are required to accept children of different ages and diverse requirements, without taking into account their talents or capacities and are forced to compete in their academic activities in the same way as their peers (Special Need expert 1)

Despite the fact that schools admitting different age groups in the same class practically affect the teaching strategies and classroom hours of teachers to balance their course syllables with the age differences of the children attending the same class.

## 5.2 School physical environments accessible for CwWODs attending O-class

### *5.2.1 Site and playground of O-class in primary schools*

The findings of the observation indicated that from the four O-classes, only one school was relatively conducive to those CWDs. In the remaining three, the playing ground is very small and there are stones, breakers, and accumulated sands near the main road.

It is possible to infer that due to a lack of Montessori resources, lack of furniture for classrooms, and play spaces, lack of rooms, damage to the classroom ceiling, and lack of a skilled workforce, the school campus is unsuitable for O-class CwWODs.

### *5.2.2 Indoor environment*

Observations conducted in primary schools with O-class participants in this study showed that the schools were not properly equipped with indoor materials and equipment. The children sat on oversized chairs at some schools. Classrooms are very small in size and fractured, chairs are not suitable for children, and the teaching materials are not well organized.

Children who sat on chairs of inappropriate sizes felt uncomfortable, and some of them even stood to see teachers and blackboards. Concerning the classroom size of O-classes, teachers probed whether the sizes of the rooms were proportional to the number of children in the classes. Teachers from one of the O-classes pointed out the following.

The rooms in which the O-class students attended classes were constructed for the primary students' classroom purposes. However, the classes accommodated more students than their standards (Teacher 4 (T1)).

Teachers from the other two primary schools with O-classes disclosed that classrooms in which the O-class students were learning were not built for classroom purposes. These classes were built for stores, registrar offices, and other purposes.

The number of children in the O-class was higher than the number of students expected to be accommodated in one class. One school director stated that, "According to the guidelines in one O-class around 40 students is appropriate or 1 teacher to 40 (1:40) student ratio is advisable." However, observations conducted at the schools helped to identify that the number of O-class students pursuing their schooling in a single class was more than 50 and the classroom space was inadequate in all schools.

### *5.2.3 Outdoor environment*

Primary schools are not separated by a fenced playground for O-class students. The compound is not well equipped with the necessary materials that are mandatory for O-class students' future social and psychological development. It was observed that there were outdoor play materials, such as marry go rounds, climbers, balance beams, and swings in the playground separated for O-class students but most of the outdoor playing materials were not functioning because of a lack of maintenance.

The inadequacy of outdoor playing materials in primary schools with an O-class has a negative effect on students' physical, intellectual, creative, emotional, and social development. This limits children's opportunities to investigate and explore their environments, learn to live with peers, and interact freely with available materials and equipment. It would also limit children's possibilities for playing, exercising, and developing physical skills, to build self-confidence and competence, which are the main goals of pre-school education programs.

Regarding the presence of separate toilets for O-class students, the primary schools lacked separate toilets for O-class students. The O-class students shared the same toilets with primary school students. The toilets lacking potable water, were not child-sized or clean, and could not invite students to use them.

## 5.3 Skilled human power assigned for O-class, O-class teachers' training and experience

Teachers' training, experience, and benefits play a major role in delivering quality education for students attending schools in general and in O-classes. Five of the teachers responded that they were 10th grade complete with no teaching or other work experience when recruited as teachers for O-class students, but they were made to take short-term training on student-centered teaching methodology for eight months in different teachers' training colleges found in the region. The selection mechanism of trainers depends on those who have low matric results in grade 10 scores and who are unable to

join preparatory school (Grades 11 and 12). After getting eight-month training they were hired by the town administration without any criteria.

Yet, the other O-class teacher said that she had a college diploma in the language stream and had above 21 years of experience in teaching in primary schools and now she was assigned as an O-class teacher and O-class coordinator.

The Durance Town Administration Education Office also indicated that the majority of O-class teachers were 10th-grade students and had no experience in teaching when they were assigned as teachers for O-class students. On the other hand, related to teaching CWDs, the office reported that the teachers did not have experience or received training on how to teach children in an inclusive manner.

One special need expert underlined further;

Theoretically, all schools must accommodate CWDs, but it is difficult to accommodate children at the class level because most teachers have no idea, and they have no training on how to teach in inclusive classes. It is too difficult. The children were all mixed. For example, if a child with hearing impairment is in an O-class, it is difficult to support and teach them due to a lack of sign language ability, awareness, and assistive devices. This is the reality in most schools (Special need expert 2)

During interviews with school directors and town ECCE experts, they were asked, "Why the Durame Town Education Office was not hiring qualified and certified teachers for O-classes?" One of them said,

It is very difficult to get qualified teachers in ECCE in general and in O-class in particular, as there are few ECCE graduates in the market. There are no well-trained teachers in the O-class field. Professionally trained pre-school teachers in the region are in high demand for private pre-schools. The Durame Town Education Office has no adequate budget for hiring and assigning these professionals as O-class teachers (ECCE Expert).

During classroom and playfield observations, the findings indicated that the O-class teachers' experience of applying active learning methods and play-based approaches was not the expected standard. As observed, the focus of O-class teachers was on teaching children formal/academic skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic exercises.

## 5.4 Teaching and learning materials for O-class CWwOD and teachers

### *5.4.1 Availability of curricular and other necessary teaching-learning materials*

Essential O-class curricular materials such as syllabi, teacher's guides, text books, and other related materials that serve as a cornerstone to guide children's learning are expected to be available in primary schools with O-classes and accessible to O-class teachers. However, primary school directors and O-class teachers replied, "The education office does not give us, but textbooks copied/duplicated from nearby private schools were used to teach O-class students."

This implies that the lack of essential educational materials available for O-class teachers forced the O-class teachers to use their personal experience and knowledge, making academic achievement and personal readiness of O-class students vary from class to class in the same school and from school to school. Nevertheless, this does not mean that teachers' efforts are of no avail. For example, During FGD, one of the parents of O-class students commented:

My son joined O-class, he brought so many changes in concrete areas. I mean that most of the time he retrieved pictorial things such as designs of homes, trees, wild animals, and so on. Sometimes most of his homework focuses on the art and the drawing of musical instruments (parent 6 (P6)).

During classroom observation, the researchers critically observed and analyzed the content and lesson topics of environmental science textbooks copied from nearby private schools. It was learned that some of the examples listed under plants and animals were not familiar to O-class students and were difficult for O-class teachers to translate into the local language. In addition, some teachers have a gap in understanding the idea of the text copied from private school books.

### *5.4.2 Availability of guideline for inclusion of children with disabilities to O-class*

The Ethiopian government is committed to bringing all children to school following the philosophy of inclusive education. However, when the directors of primary schools with O-classes were asked about the availability and extent of implementation of guidelines for inclusion of CWDs, among the four schools, three school directors reported the following:

At the theoretical level, the schools' door is open for all learners without any segregation, but practically, there are several challenges regarding the school environment such as lack of materials for those who need support, lack of training, and skilled teachers on how to teach students with different types of needs (SP2, SP3, and SP4).

Furthermore, special need experts who are special need center coordinators of O-class, stated the following:

The challenges regarding children with special need education in O-class is multifaceted. Ranging from lack of awareness and understanding about special needs education in the working environment and of community to the lack of infrastructures, teaching materials, and inaccessible classroom settings (Special Need experts 1 & 2).

During FGD with parents, one of the discussants raised that the O-class does not provide satisfactory education for CWDs, especially for students with visual impairments. One of the parents of the FGD stated that:

My son was with visual problem and I asked my neighboring school to admit him and the school enrolled him, but later my son was dropout after one month because the school has not met my child's educational needs by providing the necessary educational provisions (P7).

This finding agrees with the Education Statistics Annual Abstract 2007 E.C. (2014/15), which found that out of 2.9 million children attending pre-school only 4615 children with special educational needs were attending pre-school through the O-class and Child to Child Program, while others were left behind.

### *5.4.3 Budget allocation*

The allocation of budgets for certain activities implies the extent of focus given to the activity or the program. School directors were asked whether the local government allocated a sufficient budget for the O-class program. All directors of primary schools with O-classes participated in the study, underlining that the local government did not pay

due attention to the O-class program. As a result, no budget was allocated to the O-class program of the primary schools participating in the study.

According to the school directors, primary schools did not provide support for slice budgets to the O-classes that they had scarce budgets themselves. As a result, the schools were unable to provide the necessary indoor and outdoor materials for students attending O-classes. School directors and ECCE experts were asked why the local government was not willing to allocate a budget for the O-class program. The school directors and ECCE stated the following:

We have been asking this question since the commencement of O-classes in our schools. The response we get from the Education Office and Office of Finance and Economic Development of the Durame Town informed us there was no a separate budget for the program.

Therefore, it is possible to suggest that O-class programs run under the charity of primary school budgets. Thus, they are not allowed to function in a full-fledged manner as an independent education system.

## 5.5 Parents of CwWODs participating in the implementation of an inclusive O-class

Parents' awareness of and participation in the implementation of the O-class program are very important for schools and children attending it. In the interview and FGD parents explained that O-classes were open for children from low-income families who could not send their children to private schools. Parents explained that their children were very happy, active, and sociable since they joined the O-classes. During the FGD they shared their ideas about the O-class, underlining that the O-classes met their income level.

Our children joined O-class in governmental schools we feel the schools are accommodating enough to our low-income economy. We are not able to afford for a private school, so economically governmental schools are very advantageous and cost-free (all parent participants).

During the FGD, parents were also asked about the extent of their participation in the O-class to improve their children's learning. They revealed that although there were times when the schools called for meetings to discuss the overall performance of the O-class students, very few parents participated in the meetings. In-depth interviews with O-class teachers also showed that the participation of parents in O-class activities was very low, mainly most had no practice observing children's exercise books when teachers gave homework to assess the progress of their academic performance. Issues in the academic performance of O-class students were left only to the teachers, implying that parents' awareness of the O-class teaching-learning process was very low. However, few schools show limited interest in inviting parents to participate in school activities to improve the quality of education. Possible to infer therefore there is weak interaction between schools and parents.

# 6 Discussion

## 6.1 Opportunities

The opportunities to be discussed here below were drawn from general finding inferences and review of related literature. From the findings, the following things can be taken as opportunities: In the O-class the teachers are females; CWDs are learning together with CWODs at early age which will facilitate their social interaction presently and will create future inclusive society; CWDs were found to engage in the outdoor play materials but with limitation yet it will have positive effect on their physical, intellectual, creative, emotional, and social development; though unprofessional in strict sense but the deployment of O-class teachers for O-classes paves the way in the future the need and urgency to produce O-class teachers in teacher training colleges and universities of the country; though things are not that much accessible CWDs are able to participate in the play fields which will have positive impact on their physical and cognitive developments; and CWDS the same with CWODs are able to access the same curricula and other necessary teaching-learning materials (syllabus, teaching guides, textbooks, and other related materials).

Most importantly, the most encouraging opportunity of the opening of O-class is to parents of CWDs. Mostly, in developing countries including Ethiopia, CWDs come from poor families. And in these contexts the access to education is minimal and if available it would be minimal. Thus, given the negative attitude of the society towards people with disabilities, having a CWD who is out of school realm would cause incalculable negative consequences and burdens to parents. Therefore, the opening of O-class has much more contributions to parents. For example, psychologically, parents would benefit in believing in their children potential that they can go to school and learn like other CWODs and their future will be bright through education. In term of wining their daily breads, parents will use the time they used to devote to care their CWDs to works that can generate income. Parents would also get time to balance their work and social life and so on and so forth.

## 6.2 Challenges

Chowdhury and Choudhury (2002) stated that the site of ECCE centers should be in the neighborhood of the children served. The ECCE centers should also be located away from crowded areas of the town, cemeteries, and main traffic areas to ensure children's safety. MoE, the Ethiopian School Development Plan (ESDP) V (2015) also emphasized that the school environment must be accessible, safe, and healthy. However, observations of the four sample primary schools with O-classes showed that only one school has a relatively conducive compound for those who have disabilities, and the remaining three were not. In their compound the playing ground is very small and there are stones, breakers, and accumulated sands near the main road. The physical environment of these pre-schools is not safe, accessible, or healthy. As a result, things do not support the physical well-being, intellectual development, or social development of children.

Indoor materials and equipment (e.g classrooms, seating arrangements, and materials) are essential for the implementation of ECCE. The effective usage of these materials and equipment makes the teaching-learning process more tangible and easily understandable. Pairman and Terreni (2001) (cited in Labuschagne, 2015; Bietenbeck et al., 2019) stated that early childhood indoor environments can be seen as an additional teacher because they speak to the learners and tell them what to do, where to do, and how they can work together with other learners. However, the O-classes were observed to have several problems with their materials and equipment. Thus, it is possible to infer that CwWODs attending their education in O-classes are not learning properly. In other words,

the social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive development of children may be delayed and the efforts of teachers to support these processes will be sluggish and discouraged.

Archer (2007) (as cited in Labuschagne, 2015; Bietenbeck et al., 2019) stated that learners' outdoor play is limited by inaccessible environments. Limited access to outdoor play at home necessitates the importance of a suitable outdoor play area in schools where learners have sufficient opportunity to play and run around (Monkfield Park, 2013 as cited in Labuschagne, 2015; Bietenbeck et al., 2019). In the study area, primary schools were not separated by a fenced playground arranged for O-class students with the necessary materials mandatory for O-class children's social and psychological development in future life. Few schools had outdoor play materials, such as marry go rounds, climbers, balance beams and swings in the playground but most of the outdoor playing materials were not functioning because of lack of maintenance.

This finding is contrary to Ministry of Education (2010b), who stated in the strategic document that outdoor play equipment must be well maintained, clean, and developmentally appropriate which can provide many opportunities for creativity and the development of different skills. The inadequacy of outdoor playing materials in primary schools with O-class has a negative effect on children's physical, intellectual, creative, emotional, and social development. This limits children's opportunities to investigate and explore their environments, learn to live with peers, and interact freely with the materials and equipment available. It would also limit children's possibilities for playing, exercising, and developing physical skills, to build self-confidence and competence, which are the main goals of pre-school education programs.

Adequate qualified O-class teachers were not assigned to primary schools with the O-classes under study. The National Strategic Operational Plan and Guidelines for ECCE (Ministry of Education, 2010b) emphasizes the ability and skills of teachers to work with and/or care for younger children. The O-class teachers were asked about their level of education and work experience when they were assigned as O-class teachers and most reported as they are $10^{th}$ grade complete with no teaching or other work experience. The selection mechanism of these teachers depends on those who have low Matric results in grade 10 scores and who are unable to join preparatory school (grades 11 and 12). At the same time, teachers were not prepared to teach CWDs in an inclusive manner, nor did they have the support of special needs professionals, for example, sign language interpreters, in their classes to teach children with hearing impairment. This finding is in line with Yigzaw and Abdirahman (2017) and Girma (2014) who reported that the majority of pre-schools in Ethiopia had no teachers with the required qualifications to teach preschools; however it is against the Early Childhood Care and Education Strategic Operational Plan and guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education (Ministry of Education, 2010b) which requires all pre-school teachers to have a minimum certificate in ECCE or have attended a 2 months course to upgrade their skills and knowledge.

Essential O-class curricular materials, such as syllabi, teachers' guides, textbooks, and other related materials that serve as a cornerstone to guide children's learning are expected to be available in primary schools with O-classes and accessible to O-class teachers. However, the findings show the unavailability of these crucial and basic educational materials. The school directors and O-class teachers replied that, "textbooks copied/duplicated from nearby private schools were used to teach O-class students." This implies that the unavailability of the O-class syllabus, teachers' guide, and other relevant educational materials in primary schools is not supported by age and pedagogically appropriate curriculum, which might hamper the expected steady learning process of children.

As for inclusive education guidelines, there was no real practice or sufficient level to practice inclusive education for CWDs in the O-classes the fact that there were no enforcing guidelines prepared by the MoE. This finding is not in line with the main plan of inclusive

education MoE's (2016) strategy, which sets a goal to equip teachers and school leaders with the knowledge and skills of children's special educational needs.

Parents' awareness and participation in the implementation of an O-class program are very important for schools and children attending O-classes. However, the respondent parents disclosed that they did not interact well with the schools. This implies that parents' awareness is very low and they do not support the inclusion process of their CWwODs.

The allocation of budgets for certain activities implies the extent of focus given to the activity or program. All respondents confirmed that there was no separate budget for O-classes. The O-classes receive the budget of the primary schools where they are annexed, showing the lack or absence of commitment and determination of the government or MoE of the country to the program, and CWwODs attending the program by implication. This finding agrees with the findings of many researchers', for instance, Belay et al. (2016), who in their study revealed that primary schools operating under a serious budget and logistic constraints were expected to host O-classes.

## 7 Conclusions

In terms of opportunities based on drawn findings and review of related literature, the following can be taken as assets for future full-fledged O-class in the country: the commencement of O-classes lately which was not the case before one decade; though the policy is not going to affect fully in the country the MoE education encourages O-class as a system of education; ECCE professionals are graduating in the country at BA, MA, and PhD levels and the same is the case for special needs and inclusive disciplines; parents are being introduced to and have started to acknowledge the benefit of O-class to their children; and O-class doors have started to be open for CWDs than it was not the case a decade ago even in some places; assigning of female teachers; CWWDs are learning together; CWDs engage in the outdoor play materials, CWDs are made to access the same curricula and other necessary teaching-learning materials (syllabus, teaching guides, textbooks, and other related materials), and parents were able to send their CWDs to school and that they are happy their children are at school and that they are able to spend their time in work and social activities.

Whereas, the challenges include not limited to; Inadequacy of standardized classrooms; inaccessibility of the school environment for CWWDs; inadequacy of appropriate indoor and outdoor playing materials (lack of restrooms, lack of water and child-size appropriate toilets, playing ground, and lack of pictures on wall which helps students rehearsing abilities); lack of position at district level to facilitate O-class education; lack of skilled workforce in the field of O-class teachers; lack of attention from the concerned body; lack of on-the-job training for O-class teachers; attendance of different age groups of O-class students in the same class; making low academic achievers to be O-class teachers; lack of adequate budget; lack of curricular and other necessary teaching-learning materials; absence of curriculum, syllabus, teachers' guide, and textbooks for O-class teachers; lack of experience and training for teachers how to teach a student with different types of needs; lack of active community/parental participation in the teaching-learning process; and lack of awareness about pre-school education.

Thus, it was concluded that the practice of an inclusive O-class mainly for CWDs has to be celebrated because there is no such practice in almost all parts of the country in which the children are all in all denied the right to education in these schools; it is being challenged by several factors.

## 8 Recommendations

The recommendation is to capitalize on the available opportunities and reduce and remove the challenges mentioned. The latter includes hiring well-trained teachers, providing ongoing training, and improving the selection mechanism of college candidates based on their academic achievement, which means that high-ranking academic achievers must join O-class teacher training centers, increase the parental environment, and raise awareness about the importance of O-class education.

All children, particularly CWDs, have unique special needs thus when designing and implementing policies, laws, and services, it should of interest to them. CWwODs have the right to access and be educated on their all-round development. Community participation in any program is crucial for the implementation of ECCE; thus, communities have to be trained and must have received training on the importance of O-class education in their child's future. Parents must participate in school activities, O-class teachers must share students' academic reports with their parents, and the Durame Town administration must provide awareness training for parents.

Finally, the researcher recommended that the Durame Town Education Office build preprimary schools with O-classes to the standard levels. The education office must allocate sufficient budget to the O-class. To reduce educational challenges, the Education Office must work to build capacity, and organize ongoing workshops, seminars, conferences, and pieces of training to enhance the professional competence of O-class teachers.

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## Data Availability

Data can be made available on the behavior of the request

## Declaration of interests' statement

The author declare no competing interests.

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## Research Original Article

# Primary school teachers role to implementing inclusive education in selected primary schools of Hawassa City Administration, Sidama Region

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**KEYWORDS:**
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## Abstract

*The purpose of this study was assessing primary school teacher's role to implementing inclusive education in selected primary schools of Hawassa city administration. To achieve this purpose, the researcher utilized a convergent mixed research method. The questionnaire was responded by 46 teachers and 12 experts. Likewise semi-structured interview was conducted with 4 principals and nine students with disability. They were selected from four sampled primary schools. Quantitative data was tabulated and analysed by using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Whereas, the qualitative data was analysed using a thematic analysis approach. The finding of the study shows that, teachers failed to carry out their roles in an accurate manner to the implementation of inclusive education practices. Hence, inclusive education in participant schools was not practiced well. This is because of Teachers didn't understand well about their role to implement inclusive education; the absence of adequately trained teachers about the implementation of inclusive education; teachers also lack knowledge, commitment and consistency to implement inclusive education. Furthermore, lack of appropriate instructional materials for learners with disabilities; a shortage of experts trained in special needs education; and a lack of parents and community awareness about their children's education were another factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education. Thus, this condition directly challenges the implementation of inclusive education and exacerbates the barriers that prevent students with disabilities from attending school in particular and from participating in other activities of community in general. Hence, the researcher suggested: provision of adequate training for teachers; employing more experts in special needs education; improving the budget allocated for implementation of inclusive education; and inaugurating policy to evaluate the practice of teachers in particular and schools in general regarding the implementation of inclusive education.*

## 1 Introduction

Since all states are required by law to provide education for all children, education is recognised as a human right under the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Children with impairments also have the right to take part in all facets of life. This declaration has led to the universal acknowledgment of inclusion and inclusive education

as fundamental rights. Therefore, it can be concluded that: the practice of inclusive education has universal acceptance because of this declaration.

Inclusion is an ideology that calls on communities, schools, and neighbourhood to cherish and welcome everyone. The notions that variety is important, everyone belongs, and we can all learn from one another are at the heart of the inclusion concept. This technique differs from mainstreaming in schooling. According to Renzaglia et al. (2003), mainstreaming suggests that people with disabilities have a separate placement and only participate in mainstream activities when they are able to do so successfully.

Inclusion means enabling all students to participate fully in the life and work of mainstream settings whatever their needs Csie (as cited in Asrat, 2013). Specifically, As it is mentioned in the Salamanca framework, inclusive education means a school which accommodates all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic and other conditions. All children refers to, "children with disabilities, gifted children, homeless children, children belonging to nomadic groups, children belonging to linguistic minorities, ethnic or cultural, children with HIV or belonging to any other vulnerable groups". The focus should be on making education accessible for students with all kind of disabilities (Tirussew, 2005).

In summary, inclusion refers to the process through which all people, regardless of their traits, participate in all socioeconomic and political aspects of society. While, inclusive education is specific concept, that is an education system provides every child equal opportunity to learn regardless of their behaviour and facilitates to fulfil their requirement to attend in mainstream schools.

Ethiopia's 1991 Constitution (articles 41 and 91) emphasised the need to provide resources and support underprivileged populations, and also created the universal right to education. It's also true that Ethiopia's 1994 Education and Training Policy placed more emphasis on the availability of education for all youngsters. The Ministry of Education (MOE) created the first special needs education (SNE) programme strategy in 2006 during ESDP III in order to implement Education for All. To provide marginalised communities and children with special needs with access to school. The years 2006 through 2011 saw the implementation of this plan (Ministry of Education, 2012).

After the end up of ESDP III, the government established the next program which was ESDP IV 2010 up to 2015. It incorporates special needs education and inclusive education as a cross-cutting program, recognizing the strategy for Special Needs Education, the final goal of it was to ensure access and quality education for marginalized children and students with special educational needs. However, According to the review of ESDP V (2015) due to lack of awareness; lack of knowledge, skills and commitment to implement activities to support special need education which is true from the federal to the school level; no clear structure for coordination and administration of special needs education issues from federal to woreda and school levels; absence of a financing mechanism to support special need education and inclusive education; poor school infrastructure; facilities and adapted teaching and learning materials for special needs educationist was not effective (Damene, 2016).

Therefore, to resolve these barriers the government designed the next strategy ESDP V in 2015. The overall objective of the strategy was to build an inclusive education system that will provide equal, relevant and equitable education and training to all children, youth and adults with special educational needs. Ultimately, it aims to enable them to fully participate in the socio-economic development of the country (Tesfaye, 2020). The preparation of this plan has been inspired by maintaining the momentum of expanding equitable access to quality general education, establishing Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutes in all worked as, strengthening tertiary education institutions and providing lifelong learning opportunities. With this intention, Ministry of

Education introduced the 10-years Master Plan for Special Needs Education / Inclusive Education 2016-2025. This Master plan contains six strategic pillars (Ministry of Education, 2016).

In general, since 1991 the government of Ethiopia has been trying to improve implementation of inclusive education by ratifying various laws and signing agreements.

However, Kassie (2013), Binyam (2007), Tesfaye (2020) conducted investigations with regard to inclusive education and all of these researchers indicates existence of poor implementation of inclusive education in Ethiopia schools.

In addition, Bateman and Cline (2016) recommended that teachers create and carry out weekly lesson plans that encourage student participation and learning; work in tandem with principals to identify and reduce the learning gap for students with disabilities; track and evaluate each student's progress; keep in touch with students; parents or guardians meet with the special education teacher on a regular basis and provide the information needed to develop and implement modifications and adaptations; collaborate with the special education teacher to help develop a support plan that caters to the needs of every student in the classroom, but in line with the investigation of the researcher, 2 primary schools in Hawassa city during internship program, These were Hayik Dar and Ethiopia Tikdem primary school during first and second year of learning "2009 and 2010" in Hawassa University. At that time, the researcher got a chance to take an interview with principals and some students with disability from two schools. According to their reflection, The practice of inclusive education hindered by absence of special support for student with disability; limited professionals; shortage of instructional materials specially for students with visual impairment; poor infrastructural arrangement of the school; negative attitude of some teachers for students with disability; reluctance of teachers; miss-understanding of characteristics of students with disability due to stereotype.

Hence, this condition directly challenges the practice of inclusive education and exacerbates the barriers that prevented students with disabilities from attending school in particular and from participating in other aspects of society in general if teachers lack the knowledge and willingness to implement inclusive education.

Bearing this in mind, this research set out to investigate primary school teacher's role in implementing inclusive education in Hawassa city administration.

## 2 Research Problem

In Ethiopia, currently the issue of inclusive education is gaining a greater concern in development topics of the government and studies of various researchers. However, more public and effective interventions are required to advance the status of persons with disabilities, to improve their lives and help them to participate actively in different social affairs.

Kassie (2013) after assessing the issue of inclusive teaching involving visually impaired student in English language teaching (ELT) settings by focusing on selected primary schools in Amhara region, he conclude that the practice of inclusive education in the study area is in its infant stage. Fulfilling essential conditions such as, having a positive attitude towards inclusion by both teachers and visually impaired students, enrolling students in regular classes without discrimination, giving economic support from the Regional state and limited facilities at school level. In general the target schools were not in a position to fulfill the requirements of inclusive education in the process of addressing the needs of visually impaired students.

Binyam (2007) after studying challenges and opportunities that students with visual impairment exposed in Addis Ababa University, he concluded that, the teaching and learning process is not conducive for students with visual impairment because of not having adequate Braille materials, inaccessible visual instruction and non-conducive exam place. As a result of this they feel as being limited.

Similarly, Tesfaye (2020) conducted an assessment on the Practices, Challenges and Opportunities of Inclusive Education Implementation in Kambata Tambaro Zone, Ethiopia. The finding of this study revealed that there are inadequate infra structures and education facilities, sanitation facilities, lack of ramps, dirty and acoustically non-treated classrooms, equipment's and services; moreover, negative attitudes of teachers, absence of dedicated principals with regard to inclusive education, lack of budget, limited professionals, lack of responsible personnel in district, zone and region education offices. Parents started to send their children to school. However, there is lack of skilled professionals who will screen and identify according to interests of learners. There is highest number of repeaters and dropouts in early schools because of unfriendly learning environment for diversified learners. The study suggested that high attention is needed from the concerned parties for the implementation of inclusive education in the zone.

From the above studies, one can understand the existence of greater hindrances to the implementation of inclusive education. This is because of the school community as well as other stakeholders, and most researchers who conducted investigations into the practice of inclusive education have given greater concern solely to visually impaired students.

However, this study will attempt to assess the contribution of teachers in implementing inclusive education with regard to both visual impaired and hearing impaired students, because these students are the most disadvantaged groups in our education system.

The researcher was also inspired to choose this topic because of her experience in inclusive schools. The researcher is visually impaired, so the researcher has a better understanding about the challenges that students with disabilities face in the process of learning. In addition to this, the researcher experience as a student in the university observed that few students with disabilities are enrolled in different departments of the university. The reason behind this phenomenon is directly linked with barriers that students with disabilities face due to the inclusive education system in primary schools. Hence, assessing the role of primary school teachers to implementing inclusive education in Hawassa city administration has both theoretical and practical significance.

## 2.1 Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study was to assess primary school teacher's role in implementation of inclusive education in selected primary schools of Hawassa city administration. Based on this general objective, the specific objectives are stated as:

1. To examine how teachers understand and perceive their roles in implementing inclusive education.
2. To identify the extent to which teachers are undertaking their roles in implementing inclusive education.
3. To investigate the potential factors that affect teachers' role in implementing inclusive education.

## 2.2 Research Questions

1. How do teachers understand and perceive their roles in implementing inclusive education?
2. To what extent do teachers undertake their roles in implementing inclusive education?
3. What are the potential factors that affect teachers' role in implementing inclusive education?

## 2.3 Significance of the study

The study is significant in terms of the following:

It helps to identify the existing roles of teachers in implementing inclusive education in primary schools of Hawassa city administration. It is important to identify gaps that need to be addressed by teachers, principals, and other concerned bodies in the implementation of inclusive education. It provides information to policy makers and curriculum developers on how to improve the implementation of inclusive education. It also serves as a reference for future researchers.

## 2.4 Limitations

It is obvious that research work can not totally free from limitation. Hence, some limitations were also observed in this study. One, apparent limitation was that most of the primary school principals, some of special needs professional's and teachers were busy and had no enough time to respond to questionnaires and interview. Some of them who have enough time were unwilling to fill in and return the questionnaire as per the required time. Because of this, the analysis part of this study was delayed. Another limitation was shortage of Resources such as, financial and human resources were the very limitation of this study when being carried out. Due to this, the researcher couldn't participate larger population in the area.

Although there were short coming, but the researcher attempted to make the study as complete as possible.

# 3 Literature review

## 3.1 Concept of inclusive education

According to O'Toole (2019) an inclusive education is one where all students of all capabilities have the opportunity to grow and learn without any discrimination.

Discrimination based on disability refers to any kind of discrimination, exclusion, or limitation that is based on a person's disability and that has the intent or result of undermining or eliminating the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise of all fundamental freedoms and human rights in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil, or any other domain on an equal footing with others. It covers discrimination in all its manifestations, including refusals of reasonable accommodations (CRPD, 2006).

According to Simona and Amanda as cited in Wit (2012) The Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994) can be seen internationally as one of the most important standpoints for the development of inclusive education. Soon after Inclusive education has emerged as a global movement that seeks to challenge exclusionary practices. Similarly, the cni Special Needs Education (hereafter referred to as 'Agency') shows how inclusive education is interpreted differently depending on the Agency member country in which the word inclusion is being used. What is common though is that most countries usually refer to inclusive education as a way of addressing the needs of those pupils identified as having special educational needs, either in mainstream or in specialist settings. Therefore it emerges that within such countries, the term inclusion is mostly used as the new policy imperative that aims to promote the education and the provision of resources for those pupils identified as having special educational needs or at risk of being excluded from the process of learning.

According to UNESCO (2003), inclusive education focuses primarily on tearing down segregated schools in some nations while aiming to increase the number of students receiving basic education in other nations. When the ideas of inclusion and education for all are combined, the latter point becomes especially clear.

Thus, providing all children with access to a basic education through inclusive education is the way to guarantee it. If we want to provide inclusive, universal education for everyone, we cannot undervalue the role of the teacher.

## 3.2 The role of teachers to implementing inclusive education

According to Tyagi (2016) teachers play a key role in supporting inclusive education practices by: fostering a positive attitude between children with disabilities and their peers; involving disabled students in nearly all classroom activities; identifying students with disability in the classroom and referring them to experts for additional testing; and making appropriate accommodations in curriculum transactions.

Teacher should develop and implement weekly lesson plans that facilitate the participation and learning of all students; work in collaboration with principals to identify and minimize the gap in the learning of students with disability; monitor and evaluate progress of all students, maintain communication with students, parents or guardians meet with special education teacher on a regular basis and provide information necessary for modifications and adaptations to be developed and implemented; work collaboratively with special education teacher to assist in development of a support plan that meets the needs of all students in the classroom, (Bateman and Cline, 2016).

Florian (2008) stated that the preparation and adaptation of instructional materials to support the learning of children with disabilities, counselling and guidance for parents, as well as public awareness campaigns through school-based initiatives, Working together with social workers, parents, special educators, medical and physiological panels, Building a diagnostic and achievement tool, Remedial instruction for children who need it and adaptation in the evaluation process for children with special needs.

## 3.3 National status of inclusive education

### *3.3.1 Approaches of the government with regard to inclusive education*

Besides The Ethiopian Constitution accepts international declarations and conventions, the government declared education as a human right issue under articles 41 and 91

(Ministry of Education, 2012). The constitution emphasizes the need to allocate resources and provide assistance to disadvantaged group (Ministry of Education, 2006).

In line with the international declarations, conventions and policies, the government established various strategies, policy and educational programs.

Among these, the 1994 ETP or educational training policy is the corner stone for the preparation of different inclusive and special need education programs and strategies. Based on ETP, Ministry of Education (MOE) has designed special needs education (SNE) program strategy in 2006 during ESDP III; to make education accessible to children with special needs and marginalized groups. This strategy was implemented for the periods 2006 to 2011. It outlined a range of actions for improving access to education and underlines on the need to give affirmative actions to those deemed as disadvantaged society groups such as females, pastoral and semi-pastoral resident individuals and those with special needs. The strategy founded itself on the ideals of the 1994 ETP and the objectives were to implement ETP and international principles endorsed by government (Ministry of Education, 2012).

After the end up of ESDP III, the government designs another two program ESDP IV. And ESDP v. with the goal of ensuring access and quality education for marginalized children and students with special educational needs and to build an inclusive education system that will provide equal, relevant and equitable education and training to all children, youth and adults with special educational needs respectively (Damene, 2016).

## 3.4 Conceptual framework

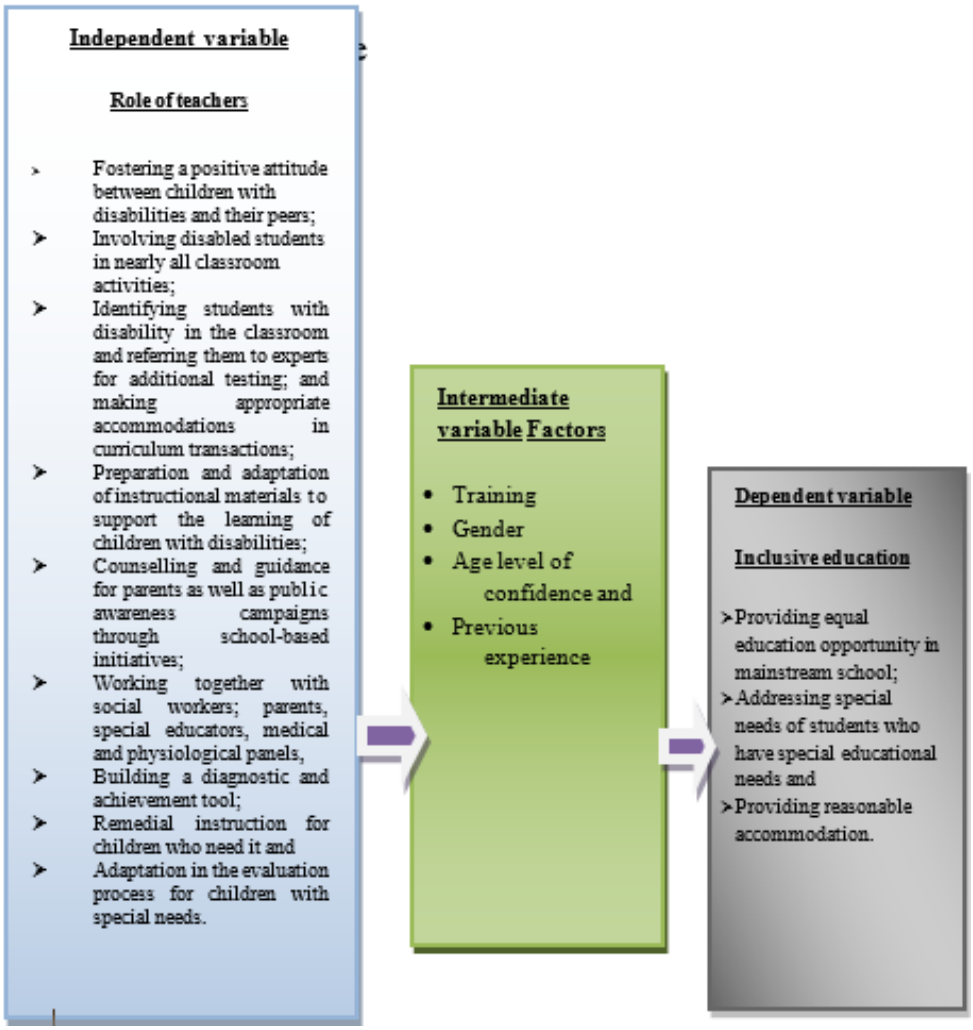



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

## 3.5 Factors influencing teachers attitude towards inclusive education

Some studies reveal that teachers' attitudes may be influenced by the disquiet they experience regarding the impact such a process will have on their time and skills (Avramidis et al., 2000).

The discussion that follows considers some of the factors raised by previous research, which may have influenced teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into mainstream classes.

### *3.5.1 Training regarding teaching students with a disability*

Researchers note that teachers may resist inclusive practices on account of inadequate training (Heiman, 2001; Hines and Johnston, 1996; Minke et al., 1996). It would appear that teachers perceive themselves as unprepared for inclusive education because they

lack appropriate training in this area (Bender et al., 1995; Daane et al., 2000; Malone et al., 2001).

Inadequate training relating to inclusive education may result in lowered teacher confidence as they plan for inclusive education (Schumm et al., 1994; Whitworth, 1991). Teachers who have not undertaken training regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities, may exhibit negative attitudes toward such inclusion (Van Reusen et al., 2001), while increased training was associated with more positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities (Briggs et al., 2002; Powers, 2002).

Training in the field of special education appears to enhance understanding and improve attitudes regarding inclusion (Kuester, 2000; Powers, 2002).

### *3.5.2 Gender*

Several studies support the view that there is no correlation between a teacher's gender and their attitude toward inclusive education (Avramidis et al., 2000; Cornoldi et al., 1998; Kuester, 2000; Van Reusen et al., 2001).

However, other studies that investigated teacher attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular settings, found that female teachers are inclined to have more favorable attitudes (Leyser and Tappendorf, 2001; Pearman et al., 1992) and appeared to have higher expectations of students with disabilities than their male counterparts (Hodge and Jansma, 2000).

Contrary to this, other studies found that male teachers were either significantly more confident than females, in their ability to teach students with disabilities (Jobe et al., 1996), or they held more positive views about inclusive education (Lampropoulou and Padeliadu, 1997). Lampropoulou and Padeliadu (1997) caution that findings linking gender as a variable to investigate reactions to inclusive education, are often linked to cultural factors, with some cultures ascribing the care of students with disabilities to female teachers.

### *3.5.3 Age, teaching experience and teachers' qualifications*

There are several studies which have investigated whether there is any significant correlation between a teacher's age, years of experience and qualification to that teacher's attitude toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular classrooms (Avramidis et al., 2000; Cornoldi et al., 1998; Heiman, 2001).

Some studies record that older teachers appear to foster less positive attitudes than younger teachers (Cornoldi et al., 1998; Lampropoulou and Padeliadu, 1997). Younger teachers appear more accepting of inclusive trends than their more experienced counterparts (Cornoldi et al., 1998). It would also seem that the most experienced educators have the lowest level of acceptance of inclusion (Forlin et al., 1996; Knight, 1999). Further to this, Whiting and Young (1995) are of the view that older, more experienced teachers are uncomfortable with inclusive practices, because they face an intrusion into their rooms by support personnel. The presence of other adults in the room may result in tension and discomfort especially as they perceived the visitor as an observer and not as additional support (Whiting and Young, 1995).

Heiman (2001) and Kuester (2000) concluded that a teacher's level of educational qualification did not significantly influence that teacher's attitude toward the inclusion of

students with disabilities into regular classes, while the study by Stoler (1992), indicated that teachers with high levels of education had less positive attitudes toward inclusion, than those who did not achieve master's degree status.

#### *3.5.4 Level of confidence*

Sigafoos and Elkins (1994) concluded that mainstream educators generally lack confidence as they attempted to include students with disabilities into their classes. This may be as a result of lacking proficiency about modifying the regular education curriculum to suit students with individual learning needs. Further, Avramidis et al. (2000) and Briggs et al. (2002), support the view that teachers who perceive themselves as competent inclusive educators, often have more positive attitudes toward inclusive education. Teachers acquire increased competence as a result of increased training in the field of inclusive education (Avramidis et al., 2000). Inadequate knowledge with regard to instructional techniques and curricular adaptations, which contributes to decreased confidence, may be factors which influence a teacher's attitude toward inclusive education (Janney et al., 1995).

#### *3.5.5 Previous experiences in teaching students with disabilities*

Possessing previous experience as an inclusive educator appears to positively predispose teachers toward inclusive education (Avissar, 2000; Avramidis et al., 2000; Hodge and Jansma, 2000). It would appear that previous experience in this field, allows mainstream teachers to feel more comfortable within the inclusive classroom (Avissar, 2000). Direct experiences of including students with disabilities into mainstream settings appeared to be an essential factor in shaping teachers' views toward inclusive settings (Avramidis et al., 2000; Giangreco et al., 1993; Villa et al., 1996). However, Briggs et al. (2002) point out that the nature of previous contact should be positive as it is this that results in positive attitudes toward inclusive education.

# 4 Research Methods

## 4.1 Research Design

In this study the researcher used descriptive survey design Cohen (1994) describes that descriptive survey research design helps to gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of current condition or identifying standards against which current condition can be compared or determining the relationship that exist between specific events. It also gives freedom to researchers in order to use different methods. Thus, descriptive survey research design is the most appropriate design for this study, because it uses to make accurate and clear description concerning the current status of teachers and their role to enhance inclusive education practices.

In this study, the researcher employed convergent mixed research method. Mixed research method is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and "mixing" both quantitative and qualitative research methods in a single study to understand a research problem. Convergent is one type of mixed research method, in this method, the researcher collected both qualitative and quantitative data concurrently and analyze the two data sets separately. Then the researcher mixes the two databases by merging the results during interpretation and sometimes during data analysis (Terrell, 2012). Similarly, in this study

the researcher collected both qualitative and quantitative data at the same time by using both qualitative and quantitative research approach and analyzes the data base separately and mixes it during interpretation. Thus, the researcher applied convergent mixed research method to collect and analyze the data.

## 4.2 Sources of Data

This study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. As primary sources, principals, teachers, special need professionals and students were used. In addition to primary, some secondary sources were utilized. Including books, journals-articles, magazines, policies and ministry of education manuals and internet websites related with the study.

## 4.3 Target population

This study was conducted at primary schools of Tabor and Addis kettema sub-city in Hawassa town Namely, Ogova, Nigistfura, Hayk Dar and Tabor primary school. The target population of this study was 46 teachers and 9 students with disability.

## 4.4 Sample size

46 Teachers and 9 students with disability were selected using purposive sampling technique and 4 principals and 12 experts were sampled by using comprehensive sampling technique.

## 4.5 Sampling technique

The researcher used three sampling techniques to choose the target groups mentioned above. Initially, Purposive sampling was used to sample two sub-cities out of eight sub-cities. In order to get more precise and comprehensive statistics, schools that have a high proportion of visually impaired or hearing impaired children should be considered. On the other hand, the researcher used a simple random sampling technique (lottery method) to select primary schools from those sub-cities in order to give each primary school in those sub-cities an equal chance because, according to the Hawassa Education Office report, those primary schools have a similar status with regard to implementing inclusive education.

Over and above, to select participants of the study the researcher utilized two sampling techniques. Since the gist of this study was assessing the role of primary school teachers to implementing inclusive education, the researcher took students with disability (hearing impaired and visual impaired students) and teachers who have an opportunity to teach students with disability purposefully in order to purposely get the more informed members of the school community. The second sampling technique was, comprehensive sampling; since special need professionals were small in number and the key responsible body to enhance inclusive education and facilitate its effectiveness, the researcher used comprehensive sampling technique.

### 4.6 Data collection instruments

In the data collection process the instrument needs to answer the research questions and the method through which this data is collected. The researcher employed 3 sets of instruments. Interview for principals and students with disability, questionnaire for special need professionals and teachers and document analysis including articles, journals, international conventions, government policies, and books related with the study.

### 4.7 Data collection procedure

The researcher first obtained an official letter of cooperation from Hawassa University's School of Education in order to conduct a study in the city of Hawassa's governmental primary schools. The letter was then delivered to the education office of Hawassa City and a few principals of the local schools. Following the letter's submission and their consent, the instruments—an interview and a questionnaire—are next given to a chosen group of participants by visiting each school for one to three days as a researcher.

### 4.8 Method of data analysis

The study conceded both quantitative and qualitative data. The data gathered through the close ended questionnaire was tabulated and analyzed by using descriptive statistics such as percentage, frequency and inferential statistics (t test). The quantitative data analysis was done by using the software of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). As well as, qualitative data, the researcher collected qualitative data and transcribed it and noted on a paper based on the code for each interview. Following this, thematic contents were formulated based on the research questions. Finally, the information gathered in different ways and places come together and analyzed under each thematic content and discussed with the findings of other related studies.

## 5 Results

Table 1: Teachers Response on their role to implementing inclusive education

| No | Items | Respondents | N | Mean | SD | Average mean | P value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Teachers participate in community awareness program with the school community concerning on impairment and inclusiveness | Teachers | 46 | 2.83 | 1.32 | 2.82 | 0.90 |
| | | Experts | 12 | 2.80 | 1.36 | | |
| 2 | Teachers develop and implement weekly lesson plan that promotes the participation of students with disability in the classroom | Teachers | 46 | 2.10 | 1.27 | 1.96 | 0.13 |
| | | Experts | 12 | 1.96 | 1.13 | | |
| 3 | Teachers have made an effort to create sense of belongingness, enthusiasm and friendship between students with disability and others | Teachers | 46 | 2.29 | 1.32 | 2.24 | 0.75 |
| | | Experts | 12 | 2.20 | 1.24 | | |

## 5.1 Findings from interview

In relation to the teacher's effort to provide awareness to the community about impairment and special education, one participant depicted that: "In our school, there are different platforms that facilitate communication between teachers and the local community, such as PTA. In this association, teachers can inform parents as well as the local community about impairment and special education with relevant examples, and the local community may inspire students with disabilities who didn't get learning opportunities because of their families. However, I still didn't hear of this kind of activity. The platform of PTA is that when discussion is held between teachers and parents in a PTA meeting, the issue of discipline and the way to improve the results of students are core ideas. For this reason, it undermines the issue of community awareness activities regarding the needs, capacity, and talent of students with disabilities. Therefore, from my point of view, teachers didn't participate actively in community awareness programmes on such issues." (P2 and P4).

Likewise, another principal added that, "From my point of view, to provide awareness for parents and the local community about impairment and special education, teachers should develop projects and search for funds to execute this project, because we have no budget for this purpose. However, this action needs patience, dedication, and time, but our teachers lack consistency. As a result, they are frustrated with taking on this responsibility. Hence, this situation restricts them from providing awareness-raising programmes concerning impairment, inclusiveness, and the special needs of students with disability." (P1).

Concerning the facilitation of a positive classroom climate and creating friendship between students with disabilities and others, one participant pointed out: "In our school, there are many students with different disabilities. Therefore, teachers who teach deaf students are responsible for facilitating conditions for them to sit in front of them since they understand by leap movement. Similarly, visual impaired students need the support of others to be able to write a note in the classroom. Therefore, teachers are expected to facilitate the creation of good communication between students with visual impairments and other students. In general, I know that most of our teachers are not practicing the roles I mentioned above because most teachers lack adequate knowledge about the teaching methods of these students, and others are not committed to practicing them." (P3).

Another participant also said, "Although I haven't seen teachers who are engaged in taking special action to build friendship between impaired students and others, I don't think any of the students in our school would think of students with disabilities as incapable of working because these students' specially visually impaired students are so successful in their academic status. Therefore, the students in the classroom are too eager to read and be with them. Students with visual impairments are also ready to draw closer and help each other." (P4). Another respondent explained that: "According to our students with impairment reflection, until we attempt to create good communication and build friendship with their peers in the classroom, students with disabilities are afraid to participate in classroom activities and to ask for any kind of support from neither their peers nor their teachers. Due to this, at the beginning, their communication was limited. Furthermore, especially visually impaired students complained about a lack of helpful students to read a note for them, which is written on the board. Though this problem occurs due to the indifferent nature of their classroom teachers, based on their complaint, I have discussed it with their unit leader, and we have decided to assign a reader to each student with a visual impairment. This action helps them to create good friendship and communication with their peers in the classroom." (P1).

In addition to principals, interviewed students also said, except for a few teachers, "Most

of our teachers haven't made any significant effort to build a friendly environment in the classroom between other students and us. However, since our learning relies on the support of other students due to a lack of instructional materials, we are attempting to create good relationships with our classmates. Because of this, today's majority of students with disabilities have good communication with others." (S 4, S5, and S6).

Another student with a disability also marked their idea as follows: "In our classroom, teachers try to build friendships between us and other students. However, these teachers as well as our classmates can't use sign language, so we communicate with them through body movement. This way is not enough to build friendships with other students. Rather than facilitating simple interaction. Therefore, although our teachers try to create friendship between us and other students, the absence of skilled students in sign language hinders us from building strong friendships with other students." (S1, S2, and S3).

Corresponding to lesson adaptation and teacher's plans, students with hearing impairments stated that: "We focus on the teacher's physical activity and writing, so teachers should pay attention to their body movement because, although we have translators, she can't address all classes that we have learned. In our school, there is only 1 translator among the 3 special needs professionals. However, some teachers didn't consider us. They teach with speed as usual; neither our translator is available nor is not available." (S1 and S2).

Over and above, other students with disabilities also said, "Teachers should make adjustments in the lesson to make it easier to teach their students equally. Particularly, students with visual impairments focus on the teacher's lecture, so the teacher should explain the visual content in a way that is as comfortable as possible for them. However, some teachers always teach as usual, whether visually impaired or hearing impaired students are presented or not. They did not care about curriculum adaptation, but when we ask them to explain pictorial or graphical issues; they ask for an apology and try to elaborate on it in detail. Hence, I think they have the willingness, but they lack consistency in their practice and were not aware of how to teach inclusive classes." (S4, S5, S6).

In relation to the participation of students with disabilities in classroom activities and other co-curricular activities of the school, the interviewee's principals said that most students with disabilities, especially visually impaired students engage actively in classroom activities. However, all of the participants agreed with the absence of active participation by students with disabilities in different events of the school, like participation in school clubs.

One of the participants explained that: "In the case of our school, there is a club in which most students with disabilities take part, which is called the Special Needs, Club. However, these students have no interest in joining other clubs at the school." (P1).

In the same manner, another participant also noted that: "In the school, there are different clubs that are managed by teachers. However, I have not yet seen any teacher who encourages and invites them to participate in the clubs. Thus, they participate only in the special needs club." (P2).

Another participant explained that: "In our school, I think 3 or 4 students with visual impairments are registered in different clubs, but some of the teachers who manage the clubs did not want to assign responsibilities for them. This kind of act may discourage students with disabilities from participating in different school activities. Therefore, as far as my understanding is concerned, teachers should invite and encourage students with disabilities in any school activity to create a sense of belongingness within the students. Because students with disabilities may think that they are ignored." (P3).

The other important point that the researcher raised for the interviewed principals and students was concerning the identification of students with disabilities in the classroom and referring them to experts. Based on the information gained from the interviewed principals, they responded that most teachers complain about the behavior and academic performance of students with disabilities in the classroom instead of identifying their specific problems and making referrals to special needs professionals. One of the participants stated that: "One of the core roles of teachers, specifically, in the implementation of inclusive education is working in collaboration to identify students who have such a disability? Then other supporting activities will be done by special needs professionals. Of course, teachers should follow the progress of these students and try to identify the problem that hindered them from learning, and they should make an attempt to resolve it, or if it is beyond their capacity, they should report it to professionals. However, still, I didn't see this kind of effort from our teachers." (P3).

## 6 Discussion

The responses of participants of this study indicated that teachers failed to carry out their roles in an accurate manner to the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools of Hawassa city administration. The implementation of inclusive education greatly insured from teachers' collaborative engagement with parents and community. According to McAvoy (2013), teachers are required to assess students' development in light of their individualised programme plan, or IPP. Work together with other staff members who are assisting the student; keep track of the student's progress; give the parents a copy of the IPP; obtain the consent of the parents; and Inform parents/guardians of students' progress on a regular basis. Once again, teachers are more accountable for addressing parental concerns since parents of students in diverse classrooms frequently have doubts about the behaviour of their children and the activities that take place there on a daily basis. Thus, the instructor needs to make the parents feel at ease. They accomplish this by attending to their worries and providing them with updates on their children's development (Sakpal, 2022).

Concerning the above point the result of this investigation detected teachers provision of awareness for parents requires a greater and continues effort, but they lack dedication and consistency on their practice to insure provision of information about their student's performance and needs for their parents.

The next activity that is expected from teachers in inclusive education system is, participation in community awareness activity: However, with regard to this aspect the finding of this study shows in primary schools of Hawassa city teachers mainly work with parents and community in relation to disciplinary and performance improvement issue. Community awareness activity concerning inclusiveness has not practiced yet. According to participant's reflections, no one participate in community awareness activity with regard to inclusiveness, because this activity quest them to prepare continuous and organized project and to have financial resource that is allocated for this purpose.

The other role that is expected from teachers in inclusive classes is curriculum modification. Florian (2008) stated that teachers should develop, modify and implement weekly lesson plan that facilitates the participation and learning of all students regardless of their personal characteristics and preparations of teaching aids/adaptation of teaching aids which will help the students with disabilities. Likewise, according to Tyagi (2016) making suitable adaptation in the curriculum transaction is one of the most important responsibilities of teachers to insure inclusiveness in the school.

On top of, Bateman and Cline (2016) suggested their idea as follow, teachers are expected to plan, coordinate, schedule and evaluate curriculum and instructional outcomes within

a secure and positive classroom environment for all students, including those with disabilities. The teacher should develop and implement weekly lesson plans that facilitate the participation and learning of all students. In line with this, the result of this investigation depicted presence of willing teachers to make lesson modification but they lack knowledge about how they adopt a lesson when they teach students with visual impairment as well as hearing impairment. As a result, these students miss some points from the lesson because of their impairment.

The other point concerning role of teachers needed to insure inclusiveness in schools is, encouraging participation of students with disability in classroom activities and other co-curricular activities of the school: In respect of this activity, Tyagi (2016) identification of the children with disabilities in the classroom and referring the identified to the experts for further examination and Involving the children with disabilities in almost all the activities of the classroom are the major responsibilities of teachers in inclusive classrooms. Besides these, teachers are enabler of cooperative learning. They do this by setting up tasks and activities to encourage students to learn in groups and participate equally in the classroom as well as out of the classroom. Peer-supported learning benefits all students. It also teaches them to work alongside those with different skills than theirs. This approach builds confidence and pushes students to give their best. Since inclusive schools are big, both disabled and non-disabled students must participate in varied extracurricular activities throughout the academic year. This participation allows better social life development of students (Sakpal, 2022). Corresponding to this activity, the finding of this study is that primary school teachers of Hawassa city administration are willing to encourage and to participate students with disability in classroom activity but not in co-curricular activities. This is because of lack of readiness to think out of the box and miss understanding of these students capacity.

The next theme in relation to inclusiveness is facilitating positive classroom climate and creating friendship between students with disability and others: as stated by Tyagi (2016) developing positive attitude between nondisabled and children with disability is one of the most important responsibilities of teacher's in inclusive schools. When children with and without disabilities learn in the same classroom, they develop relationships they may not have considered otherwise. The interaction among peers in inclusive classrooms fosters unique friendships that result in open-mindedness (Sakpal, 2022). Baring this in mind, the finding of this study revealed that teachers in the case of visual impaired students are indifferent, but with regard to hearing impaired students, teachers of these primary schools have made an attempt to support them and to create intimacy between these students and their class met. However, because of absence of skill to use sign language their attempt to build friendship among these students has been unsatisfactory.

## 7 Conclusions

As per the study's findings, the primary school teachers in Hawassa town are not doing a good enough job of fulfilling their roles. This is due to a lack of initiative and dedication on the part of the teachers, as well as a lack of understanding of their role in implementing inclusive education and the concept of inclusiveness in general. This makes more difficult to implement inclusive education and increases the obstacles that keep children with disabilities from engaging in other activities in the community. As well as from attending school.

Therefore, since teachers of these schools do not accomplished their role because of the above factors, the conclusion of this study leads to, primary schools teachers of Hawassa city administration teachers failed to carry out their roles in an accurate manner to the implementation of inclusive education. This situation entails existence of integration in Hawassa primary schools rather than inclusion.

## 8 Recommendations

Based on the problems that are gained from the study, the following recommendations are suggested

1. The government shall prepare education policy to evaluate and level the practice of schools regarding implementation of inclusive education specifically. This evaluation inspires each school to give a greater concern for the students with disability as well as inclusive education that is practiced in their environment.
2. The government shall allocate special budget for schools to cover the coast of learning materials for students with special need. Accessibility of instructional materials gives an opportunity for these students to compete with other students without disability.
3. The regional education office and central ministry of education shall facilitate adequate and practical special need training for teachers at each level to improve their knowledge and attitude concerning inclusiveness and inclusive education.
4. The regional education office and central ministry of education shall employ additional experts in special need education to identify the needs of students with disability and to give support for them as it is needed. This helps to insure inclusiveness in our education system.
5. The school's supervisory activities are responsible for assessing the performance of teachers in terms of how well they fulfil their responsibility to implement inclusive education.

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## Data Availability

Data can be made available on the behavior of the request

## Declaration of interests' statement

The author declare no competing interests.

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## Research Original Article

# Impact of global literature on students' intercultural competencies and global attitudes among freshman at Ambo University

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## Abstract

*The study looked at how using international literature affected first-year students at Ambo University's global perspectives and intercultural competency in 2023. The study questions were addressed through the use of a quasi-experimental design. The comparison group and comparison group students took part in the study. The comparison group participated in an eight-week global literature intervention, and the comparison group did not participate in the intervention but attended their regular classes. Questionnaires and interviews were used as data-gathering instruments. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 23 version, while the interview was analyzed qualitatively. The students who participated in the global literature increased their global attitudes from 39.16 to 42.62, with a difference of 3.46. However, the mean score of the comparison group increased from 38 to 39.88, with a difference of 1.88. When compared to the comparison group, the students in the treatment group showed a higher score. In a similar way, the students in the treatment group increased their intercultural competences after the global literature intervention compared to students who did not participate in it (M = 2.94, SD = .13 to M = 3.86, SD = .19). This study found that the use of global literature positively affected students' perceptions' of global literature. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to include learning from multi-cultures so that their students understand others' cultures and religions and become members of the global community.*

## 1 Introduction

In this competitive age and the 21st century, global knowledge and skills are paramount. In order to help our students be competent with international competitors, it is important to focus on global cultures and global literature in the classroom, especially in EFL classrooms. Global literature is an element of international education since it comprises the contents and contexts of global. In an increasingly globalized world, the decades-old call for the inclusion of international knowledge in the English language curriculum has become more urgent (Liang et al., 2013). Arguments for international education include the ability to promote respect for different cultures and traditions (Martens et al., 2015), helping students acquire the skills necessary for global citizenship (Choo, 2014), and supporting children's' intellectual, emotional, ethical, and social development (Lehman et al., 2010, p. 6).

21st century skills require knowledge of international culture and a positive global attitude (Levine, 2005). The researcher of this study observed that Ethiopian teachers do not teach about the cultures of the world, especially global literature, which is better taught in the English classroom. They can teach global literature in the English language. This may disadvantage Ethiopian students when competing with international students. His personal observation also indicated that the teachers themselves lack global culture and literature. In addition to this, the curriculum seems to lack the contents of the global curriculum. The global curriculum consists of international boundaries to interconnect culture, economy, politics, and technology. By doing this, we can help our students learn and appreciate other people's cultures, observe the world with their minds, and understand that other people in the world need it. The inclusion of global literature and culture helps students develop global attitudes and the ability to be effective in the community around them (Banks, 1997).

According to Cafo and Somunco (2000), effective global curricula include elements such as respect, truthfulness, empathy, responsibilities, tolerance, honesty, cooperation, and communication. These scholars found that the implementation of these elements had a positive effect on students' global outlook.

Ethiopian education also promotes global citizenship (Bethel and Mark, 2022). One way of developing global citizens is by using global literature in the classroom (Guo, 2014). Global literature refers to literary works that come from various cultures, countries, and regions around the world. It encompasses writings that reflect diverse perspectives, experiences, and voices beyond a single national or cultural context (Mandarani and Munir, 2021). Global literature often explores universal themes, such as love, identity, and human struggles, while also shedding light on specific cultural, historical, and social contexts (Johnson and Smith, 2018). Global literature can also include works of fiction, non-fiction, poetry, drama, and other literary forms. It encompasses both classic and contemporary texts, written by authors from different cultural backgrounds and in various languages. These texts transcend geographic boundaries and offer readers the opportunity to explore and understand different cultures, traditions, and ways of life (Mustofa and Hill, 2018).

Students' global attitude, cultural competence, and attitudes toward global literature are influenced by their prior exposure to diverse texts and their teachers' pedagogical approaches (Anderson, 2020). In addition to this, Smith and Thompson (2017) argue that the integration of global literature into the curriculum positively impacts students' motivation and engagement in learning in general.

Park and Lee (2019) investigated how exposure to global literature contributes to the development of students' critical thinking skills. Their studies showed that analyzing and interpreting diverse texts enabled students to think critically about social, cultural, and global issues. Therefore, it is teachers' role to help their students connect with global time. Nowadays, people move around the world for education, business, and vacation. Therefore, knowledge of world culture is very important for the new generation. According to Engler and Hunt (2004), students who have knowledge of cultural relations benefit in many ways, such as getting good jobs and meeting the needs of the 21st century. International education is not only the teaching of the history of the world and the teaching of the land topography of the world (Merryfield, 1997), but also the teaching global literature and cultures.

## 2 Research problem

Teaching English through literature is a powerful and engaging approach that allows students to develop language skills while exploring rich and diverse texts. By incorporating

literature into English language teaching, you can inspire a love for reading, enhance language skills, and foster critical thinking and cultural awareness among your students (Park and Lee, 2019). However, in my experience as a student and teacher of English at different levels, there was a lack of integration of literature in teaching English on behalf of teachers and curriculum. This may affect students' global attitudes, cultural competence, and perceptions of using literature. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of global literature on freshman students' global attitudes, cultural competence, and perceptions of using global literature.

Studies were conducted in the area under study. For instance, Louise (2006) study found that the teaching of literature from different cultures increased students' understanding of many cultures. Another study by Kuperus (1992) also showed the students had a positive attitude and awareness of global literature. Galinsky et al. (2005) also found that students develop intercultural competence when they understand their own and global cultures. Hassan et al. (2020) investigated students' perceptions of the English literature component in Malaysian secondary schools. Hassan et al. (2020) study found that students had a good perception of English literature. Students also believe that English literature can help them develop cultural awareness, critical thinking, and English grammar and vocabulary.

In local contexts, Amsalu (2019) also studied Grade 11 teachers' and students' perceptions towards the significance of reading literary texts in English language learning in Addis Ababa. His study showed that almost all teachers and students agreed on the role of reading literary texts in learning English. However, because of language problems, a lack of time, and a lack of interest, they did not regularly read in them. In addition to this, Gedeftaw and Yihenew (2018) also carried out a study on a panoramic evaluation of literary texts in preparatory (grades 11 and 12) students' English textbooks. This study showed that most of the texts are beyond the abilities of students. Teachers themselves also confirmed that they had difficulty understanding the language of some texts.

### 2.1 Research questions

1. Is there a statistical difference in the global attitudes of students who participated in global literature compared to the students who did not participate in it?
2. Is there a statistical difference in the cultural competence of students who participated in the global literature compared to those who did not take part in the global literature?
3. What are students' perceptions toward global literature?

## 3 Review Literature

### 3.1 Nature of global literature texts

The global literature in this study was adapted from literature identified by IRA 2009. The IRA collected global literature and international cultures. Many of the works of literature were chosen from these lists, and others were gathered from the internet. Moreover, the researcher picked up global literature that is appropriate for the levels. In doing that, global literatures that reflect the interconnectedness of the world and address universal human experiences, such as love, loss, identity, and the human condition, were selected for this study. They were materials that were written by authors from different countries and cultures but translated into English to enable participants in the study to engage with them.

The students were first taught global literature. Then, the students read passages that represent different cultures and discussed them with each other in pairs and groups. They were encouraged to expand their cultures and put them in global contexts. The communicative language teaching methods were used in the classroom to enhance the student-centered approach. Participants in the study reflected on what they read and reacted to the texts. The role of the researcher was to scaffold the discussions.

Materials selected were also in the form of fictions and non-fictions so that the students could understand elements of literature or stories in reading fictions and cultural components in reading nonfictions. Fairclough (1999) argues that bringing other cultures into one culture motivates students to practice language. According to Bond (2006), if the teaching materials the students engage in are taken from global texts, they can be difficult and the students cannot comprehend. Therefore, global texts should engage students in such a such a way that they easily understand other cultures and invite self-expression (Xu, 2015). This is called culturally responsive teaching.

This means teachers need to adopt culturally responsive teaching practices that connect students' cultural backgrounds and experiences with the global literature being studied. In addition to this, this study includes contemporary global literature that reflects current societal issues and concerns such as migration, globalization, climate change, and social justice. This helps students engage with real-world issues and fosters critical thinking and empathy (Gay, 2010).

Constructivism theory was used as a theoretical framework. This theory places much of the of the responsibility of learning on students and teachers as facilitators (Marzano, 2003). Therefore, the students were allowed to explore and discover global cultures using global literature. They interacted by reading texts full of literature and discussing them with one another after reading the texts. The researcher explained the elements of a story, like setting, plot, character, theme, conflict, point of view, and mood, before reading the texts. Then, the students shared character, themes, and any other issues they understood.

The intervention in global literature was taken for eight weeks, two times a week. In each lesson, the students who participated in the study were taught about global literature and cultures. Two types of reading texts on global literature were used for each session to be aware of them

Table 1: Readability level of literature

| No | Scores | difficulty levels | Grade levels |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 90-100 | Very easy | 5th to 7th students |
| 2 | 80-90 | Easy | |
| 3 | 70-80 | Fairly easy | |
| 4 | 60-70 | Normal | 8th to 9th students |
| 5 | 50-60 | Fairly difficult | 10th to 12th |
| 6 | 30-50 | difficult | College |
| 7 | 0-30 | Very difficult | |

## 3.2 Readability level of literature

An assumption is that global literature prepared for practice should go with the students' levels. To ensure this, two pieces of literature were checked in terms of their readability using the Flesch Reading Ease software readability checker and an online software readability checker. According to this software, the two literature readability levels went with college students' ability levels, with a score of 28. This readability formula uses two measures. Firstly, it measures the average number of words in a sentence. Lastly, it measures

the number of syllables per word. The software showed that the texts were appropriate for freshman students. Accordingly, the results were sorted according to the following:

# 4 Research methods

## 4.1 Research design

This study used mixed-methods research and a quasi-experimental design as research design. Seventy-five students took part in the learning of global literature. Quantitative data were collected on two variables: global attitude and intercultural competence. The former was first prepared by Westerville City Schools in 2010. The latter survey was prepared by Bennett (1993). Qualitative data was collected using interviews with five students to answer research question No. 3 and to support quantitative data. The purpose of the interview was also to check the participants' global attitudes and cultural competences after the intervention.

This study demonstrated participants' understanding of global attitudes before and after the global literature treatment. Adapted global attitude and cultural competence surveys were distributed before and after the intervention. Global attitude survey questions: 20 items with four points Likert scales include always, sometimes, never, and I don't know. An adapted form of cultural competence survey was first prepared by Bennett in 1993. This survey was also on four-point Likert scales: always, sometimes, rarely, and never. In this study, the adapted form was used. Bennett described many levels of cultural competence.

Comparison and comparison groups participated in this study. There were 75 students in the comparison group and 78 students in the comparison group. After pretests, students in the comparison group participated in learning about global literature and culture, but the students in the comparison group participated in the regular class.

## 4.2 Sampling techniques

The convenience sampling technique was used to identify the setting of the study. Ambo University is where the researcher is. Among the four campuses of the university, Hachalu Hundessa Campus was selected since the researcher taught English there in 2023. This type of sampling saves time and money (Hatch, 2003). There were 26 sections of freshman students. Among them, two sections were selected using simple random sampling techniques. Accordingly, sections 4 and 6 were chosen for the study. Section 4 (N = 75) was selected as the treatment group, and Section 6 (N = 78) was selected as the comparison group by drawing a lottery.

## 4.3 Methods of data collection

Two types of instruments were used in this study to collect the necessary data. These were questionnaires and interviews.

#### *4.3.1 Questionnaires*

Questionnaires were used to collect data about students' global attitudes and intercultural competence. Two types of questionnaires were collected: a global attitude survey and a cultural competence survey. Among the 24 items in the in the global attitude survey, only 13 questions were selected and adapted for this study (see table 6). An interview was also carried out with five students to gather data about their perceptions of using global literature.

#### *4.3.2 Interview*

An interview was carried out to collect data about students' perceptions about the use of global literature. Five students participated in the interview. They were coded as S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5. A semi-structured interview type was used. A semi-structured interview is employed, which is used to collect qualitative data by setting up a situation that allows a respondent the time and scope to talk about their opinions on a particular subject. They were requested to provide their honest responses. All the interview processes were recorded so that their responses were not lost for further analysis.

### 4.4 Methods of data analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using an independent T-test and one-way independent sample ANOVA as statistical tools in order to check if the intervention of global literature had a positive effect on students' global attitude and intercultural competence. Two types of tests were used in this study. Both pretests and posttests were administered to the comparison and comparison groups. The students came from different cultures in Ethiopia and were assigned by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education randomly.

## 5 Results

The goal of this study was to investigate the effects global literature on students' global attitudes and intercultural competence among Ambo University freshmen in 2023. In order to achieve the objectives of this study, two types of survey questionnaires and interviews were used. This means a mixed method is used in order to collect the necessary data. Treatment was conducted for 8 weeks. Then, posttest survey questionnaires were distributed. After that, pretest and posttest results for each comparison and treatment group were recorded and analyzed to check whether there was an increase in global attitude and intercultural competence or not. To ensure this, a T-test was used to see the difference between the two groups in terms of global attitude and intercultural competence, and an interview was conducted to see students' perceptions about using global literature.

### 5.1 Reliability analysis of global attitude and intercultural competence survey questionnaires

A Cronbach's alpha level was computed to check the reliability of global attitude and intercultural competence survey questionnaires. The pretest of the global attitude survey and intercultural competence survey questionnaires were distributed before conducting

global literature instruction. The global attitude survey questionnaire is aimed at measuring the students' global attitude, whereas the intercultural competence survey is aimed at measuring the students' intercultural competence. A pilot study was conducted with different students on the main campus, which was different from where the main study was carried out. The pilot study also aimed at testing the reliability of the global attitude and intercultural competence survey questionnaires. The pilot result indicated that both global attitude and intercultural competence survey questionnaires were highly reliable. Based on the pilot study, some items were revised in order to meet the subjects' background knowledge.

Table 2: Reliability statistics for global attitude and intercultural competence survey questionnaire

| R.N | Survey | Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | A global attitude survey | .902 | 20 |

In order to see the internal consistency of the global attitude survey, the questionnaire was distributed to students from different campuses. Then, Cronbach alpha was computed. Accordingly, the reliability coefficient result indicated that these survey questionnaires had high reliability. The output of reliability statistics shown in Table 2 above indicated that the observed internal consistency of the instruments for this pilot study was greater than 0.75, i.e., global attitude was.90 while intercultural competence was.87. According to Lütfi and Ahmet (2020), the tests had an acceptable degree of reliabilities if they had a value greater than 0.75.

## 5.2 Analyses of global attitude pre-test and post-test

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of comparison and comparison group global attitude test and posttest survey results

| | Group | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pretest results of global attitudes | Comparison Group | 78 | 38.00 | 21.79 |
| | Treatment Group | 75 | 39.16 | 26.79 |
| Posttest results of global attitudes | Comparison Group | 78 | 39.88 | 22.13 |
| | Treatment Group | 75 | 42.62 | 24.66 |

The aim of the pretest was to compare students global attitudes and intercultural competences with the scores after the intervention of global literature. As it can be seen from the table, both the comparison and treatment group scores had similar results in pretests. The comparison group (N = 78) scored a mean score of 38.00 with a 21.79 standard deviation. In a similar way, treatment group (N = 75) scored a mean score of 39.16 with a standard deviation of 26.79. This implies that the students in the comparison group and treatment group were similar before the global literature intervention. However, the comparison group scored a mean score of 38 in the global attitude pretests and 39.88, with a difference of 1.88. The mean score of the treatment group was 42.62, with a difference of 3.46. When compared to the comparison group, the students in the treatment group showed a higher score. Concerning whether the alternative or null hypothesis is accepted, the alternative hypothesis is accepted because the p value is.001. This shows that the comparison group aimed a global attitude after part in the global literature intervention. The implication is that exposure to global literature increases students' knowledge of the global outlook.

## 5.3 Analysis of intercultural competence

Table 4: Descriptive statistics for the overall intercultural competences of the comparison and treatment groups before the intervention

| Groups | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| Comparison group | 2.82 | 1.17 |
| Treatment group | 2.94 | 1.06 |

The above Table 4 displays the SPSS output on the overall intercultural competence's descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation for the two groups). The mean and standard deviation of intercultural competences between the treatment and comparison groups need to be similar if the data are normally distributed. Coefficients of skewness and kurtosis also determine the normal distribution of scores. If the coefficient of skewness is too extreme, the data are not normally distributed. The skewness coefficient is accepted if its value is between a negative and a positive one. The table above indicated that there was no difference between treatment and comparison groups before the global literature intervention. The comparison group scored (M = 2.82, SD = 1.17), and the treatment group scored (M = 2.94, SD = 1.06). This result is important to compare the difference after the global literature intervention.

Table 5: Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances for pretest scores of intercultural competence

| F | df1 | df2 | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2.413 | 1 | 152 | .132 |

The equality of variances was computed using Levene's test. Table 5 above shows the test of homogeneity of variance for the intercultural competence inventory pretest. The probability value was.132, which is bigger than 0.05. This showed the variances were equal with the confidence level (95%) $F(1,152) = 2.413$, $p > .130$, which indicated that there were initially equal differences concerning their intercultural competence prior to comparing the means of the groups. In addition to this, the dependent variable's error of variance was equal across groups.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics of the intercultural competence inventory for the treatment group after the global literature intervention

| R.N | Items | Mean | Std. deviation |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I often seek contact with other people in order to learn as much as possible about their culture. | 4.52 | .551 |
| 2 | When other people don't feel comfortable in my presence, I notice it. | 3.37 | .839 |
| 3 | I find it difficult to adapt to people from diverse origins. | 4.21 | .988 |
| 4 | When I am a newcomer in a group with people from a different country, I try to find out the customs in this group by observing their behavior. | 4.57 | .497 |
| 5 | When a conversation with people from different countries fails, I reflect on why this may have happened. | 3.80 | 1.032 |
| 6 | When conversation partners use gestures and expressions that are unknown to me, I ignore them. | 3.71 | 1.23 |
| 7 | When talking to other people, I am always aware of their body language. | 4.48 | .503 |
| 8 | In conversations with speakers of other languages, I avoid unclear or ambiguous words. | 1.79 | .811 |
| 9 | I feel comfortable when encountering the different customs of people from other cultures. | 4.19 | .703 |
| 10 | It feels fairly normal to me to communicate with people of different cultures, for example, coping with misunderstandings, having a different sense of humor, etc. | 4.35 | .789 |
| 11 | When I observe people in other countries, I often guess how they are feeling. | 3.42 | .829 |
| 12 | When the behavior of people from other cultures alienates me, I avoid making contact with them. | 4.52 | .551 |
| 13 | I feel comfortable when adapting to the rhythm of life in other cultures, for example, getting used to different mealtimes, etc. | 3.34 | .850 |
| | **Grand mean** | **3.86** | **.7825** |

As it can be seen in Table 6, the grand mean score of the intercultural competence inventory for the treatment group after the global literature intervention was 3.86. The highest mean score in the items was item numbers 1 and 12, while the least score was item number 8, with a 1.79 mean. This indicated that the students who participated in the global literature intervention scored better than before the intervention.

Table 7: Comparison of mean scores of intercultural competence pretest and posttest

| Tests | The two groups | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intercultural competence tests | Comparison group | 78 | 2.82 | .18 |
| | Treatment group | 75 | 2.94 | .13 |
| Intercultural competence | Comparison group | 78 | 2.99 | .37 |
| | Treatment group | 75 | 3.86 | .19 |

The students who did not participate in the global literature did not increase intercultural competence scores before (M = 2.82, SD = .18) and after the treatment (M = 2.94, SD = .37) However, the students who participated in an eight-week global literature intervention increased their intercultural competence scores after the treatment (M = 2.94, SD = .13 to M = 3.86, SD = .19).

## 5.4 Analysis of interviews on students' perceptions of global literature

One of the objectives of this study was to investigate students' perceptions about using global literature. Interviews were one of the data gathering tools used to collect data

about them. The aim was to collect data about students' perceptions of using global literature after the interview. Students' perception of global literature refers to the way students understand, interpret, and engage with literary works from different cultures, regions, and languages around the world. The assumption here was that the global literature intervention encompasses their attitudes, beliefs, and subjective experiences when encountering and reflecting upon global literary texts. Perception in this context involves the cognitive and emotional processes through which students make sense of and form impressions about global literature. It includes their understanding of the themes, characters, cultural contexts, and social issues presented in the literature. Students' perception of global literature is shaped by their prior knowledge, personal experiences, cultural background, and educational influences.

The result obtained by the interview indicated that the students participation in global literature increased their cultural awareness. For instance, S2 said, 'The characters and narratives from different cultures helped me to understand different cultures of the world.' This is why Mandarani and Munir (2021) argue that exposure to global literature can enhance students' cultural awareness by introducing them to diverse perspectives, traditions, and experiences from different countries. In a similar way, the students who participated in global literature increased their awareness of global issues. For instance, the students developed a deeper understanding of others' experiences, emotions, and challenges (summary from S1).

The results obtained through the intercultural competence survey indicated that the students improved their intercultural competence. In a similar way, the result of the interview also supports the idea that the students who participated in the global literature improved their intercultural competence. Studies have shown that exposure to global literature can contribute to the development of intercultural competence by promoting open-mindedness, tolerance, and the ability to navigate cultural differences (Jing, 2023).

The students who participated in global literature expanded their worldviews. For example, S4 said, 'I understood different societies, values, and beliefs.' This means that such exposure to diverse perspectives can help students develop a more nuanced and inclusive worldview.

All of the interviewed students showed interest and excitement about the opportunity to discover literature from different parts of the world and embrace the diversity of human experiences in global literature. Sobkowiak (2019) argues that students who value diversity and cultural exchange often appreciate global literature as a means of broadening their understanding of different societies, languages, and customs. In addition to this, they reported that global literature allowed them to explore different cultures, traditions, and perspectives from around the world. They also appreciated the opportunity to learn about different societies, traditions, and historical contexts through literature. They also explained how they understood global literature and their attitude toward teaching it in the classroom. Furthermore, global literature enhanced their critical thinking skills and fostered a greater appreciation for the diversity of literary expression. Some of them reported that they also developed the English language. Additionally, interview results showed that the students who participated in the global literature developed their English language. Most of the participants reported that they developed their vocabulary and reading comprehension skills as a result of the intervention. For instance, S5 said, 'Exploring global literature inspired me to learn new vocabularies.' The interview result indicated that the students who participated in the global literature classroom got comfortable with how the cultures were integrated in the form of literature.

# 6 Discussion

This study found that the use of global literature positively affected students' global attitudes, intercultural competences, and perceptions' of global literature. This implies that the selection of global literature from different regions and cultures affects students' global attitudes, intercultural competence, and good perceptions about the use of global literature. One reason for this finding was that the students shared the cultures they read with each other and related them to the texts they read before. The materials were also prepared in such a way that they create safe and inclusive classroom environments that value and respect diverse perspectives. In addition to this, students engaged in collaborative discussions and encouraged meaningful discussions and dialogue about global literature in the classroom. This also provided opportunities for students to share their interpretations, ask questions, and challenge assumptions. Active listening, respect for different viewpoints, and the exploration of multiple perspectives were also encouraged by the researcher. Furthermore, the students were also helped to make connections between global literature and their own lives and relate the themes and issues in the texts to their local contexts, personal experiences, and current events. This helped them to see the relevance and applicability of global literature in their own lives, then to develop a global attitude, intercultural competences, and a positive perception about using global literature.

This finding is similar to previous studies. For example, Hernandez and Thompson (2018) investigated the relationship between exposure to global literature and the development of students' intercultural competence. Similar to the current study, they found that exposure to reading diverse texts enhance students' understanding of cultural differences, communication skills, and ability to navigate global contexts.

This study is also similar to previous studies. For instance, Johnson and Smith (2018) studied the impact of global literature on students' cultural awareness and empathy. Their study indicated that students exhibited increased cultural awareness and empathy through exposure to global literature. Another study by Lee and Chen (2019) showed that students perceive global literature as a means to broaden their understanding of diverse cultures. Like the current study, Li and Johnson (2021) also examined students' perceptions of global literature in a cross-cultural classroom. This study identified that classroom interactions shape students' attitudes towards global literature and their understanding of diverse perspectives.

Previous studies also found that exposure to global literature led students to have a positive perception of global literature. For instance, Martinez and Adams (2017) study showed that exposure to global literature influenced students' perceptions of cultural diversity. In a similar way, Chen and Wilson (2020) studied students' perceptions of global literature in secondary education and found that exposure to global literature positively affected students' interests in reading global literature. The current study also revealed that students' attitudes, interests, and enjoyment of diverse texts in using global literatures. The findings of this study also indicated that students who participated in global literature had a positive perception of using global literature. This happened because the students practiced in the classroom and then practiced at home.

According to O'Dowd (2007), the students' positive perception of global literature is not only influenced by the literature itself but also by the socio-cultural and educational contexts in which they engage with it. The students also discussed what they read in the classroom and at home. In a similar way, the Hassan et al. (2020) study found that students had a good perception of English literature. Students also believe that English literature can help them develop cultural awareness, critical thinking, and English grammar and vocabulary. The students in the comparison group carried out cross-curricular integration, which means they collaborated with texts from other disciplines to integrate global

literature across the curriculum. They were encouraged to connect global literature with subjects like history, geography, social studies, and language learning. This interdisciplinary approach provides a holistic understanding of global issues and promotes critical thinking skills.

Gedeftaw and Yihenew (2018) also carried out their study on a panoramic evaluation of literary texts in preparatory (grades 11 and 12) students' English textbooks. This study showed that most of the texts are beyond the abilities of students and teachers. The teachers themselves confirmed that they had difficulty understanding the language and contents of the text. The text did not include the students' cultural history because almost all of the texts are written by foreigners in foreign contexts. However, in this study, students' backgrounds and language levels were considered in preparing global literature for the purpose of the intervention.

## 7 Conclusions

The 21st century needs globally competitive workers who understand global issues and can connect with people in other countries. International education is required to meet this need. Having this in mind, the aim of this study was to investigate the effects of using global literature on students' global attitudes and intercultural competence among Ambo University freshmen students in 2023. The comparison group participated in eight weeks of global literature practice. Those freshman students came from different social backgrounds in Ethiopia. The comparison group consisted of 75 students, and the comparison group consisted of 78 students. A mixed-methods approach was used to answer research questions. Quantitative data was used to answer research questions one and two, while qualitative data was used to answer research question three. Before conducting interventions on global literature, pretests of global attitude and cultural competence were distributed to both comparison and comparison groups.

The students participated in the global literature and were interested in the intervention. In their classroom learning about global issues, they sometimes learn geography and history subjects. However, global education requires more content than world history and world geography. It should include an in-depth study and understanding of global issues that affect people, as well as an understanding of good behavior and performance that will help people thrive in the world. It must respond to the opinions of the world population. That was why this study included global literature to see whether the intervention would affect freshman students' global attitudes and intercultural competence. According to Engler and Hunt (2004), higher institutions need to promote international programs so that university or college graduates have an impact on the world and the economy of the world. The researcher of this study believes that the inclusion of global literature in the classroom can be one way of introducing global issues in higher education.

## 8 Recommendations

This study found that the use of global literature positively affected students' global attitudes, intercultural competence, and perceptions' of global literature. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are forwarded:

Since understanding global literature increases students' global attitude and cultural competence, it is necessary for teachers to include learning from multi-cultures so that

their students understand others' cultures and religions and become members of the global community.

Additionally, the impact of global literature on students' global attitudes and intercultural competence should be considered as part of a broader educational approach that includes other intercultural learning activities and experiences.

Finally, the students should read global literature on their own since the use of global literature improves their global attitude, intercultural competence, and perception toward using global literature.

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## Data Availability

Data can be made available on the behavior of the request

## Declaration of interests' statement

The author declare no competing interests.

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