Perceived Implementation of Teacher Education Curriculum in Ethiopia: A Look for Congruence between Intended Reform and Actual Practice

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Abstract: This study compared the teaching and assessment practices of 396 randomly selected teacher educators drawn from 8 Colleges of Teacher Education (N=234) and Universities (N=162) throughout five regional states in Ethiopia. Data were collected using a 42-item questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two subscales as teaching practice subscale (TPS) and Assessment Practice Subscale (APS). In addition, a classroom observation checklist with 30 items was used to collect qualitative data from four classrooms. Findings indicated that about 81.4% of college instructors witnessed the constructivist-oriented implementation of the teacher education curricula in their respective institutions, while none of those in the universities remained either pure behaviorist or constructivist in overall teaching practice. Teacher educators in the two types of institutions are inclined towards constructivism, but still, colleges are superior to the universities in formative continuous assessment practice. The study concludes that the constructivist reform effort is supported by college-level teacher educators while universities preferred an eclectic position. Their assessment practices are also in agreement with the reform agenda, but teacher educators at colleges proved to be superior to their university counterparts. It is recommended that university-level teacher educators revisit their instructional management and technology integration practices to catch up with the planned reform.

Keywords: *teacher education reform, teaching practice, assessment practice, behaviorist-oriented reform, constructivist-oriented reform*

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Background

Preparation of teachers for primary and secondary schools has remained the concern of the Ethiopian Ministry of Education since the restoration of the Imperial Power immediately following the expulsion of the Italian occupying forces. Despite many reform efforts concerning teacher education in the country, there is a dearth of research on education in general and teacher education in particular. With the expansion of teacher education following changes in school structure, a few pieces of research have been conducted by many education professionals. Some of them focused on historical development (Marew, (2000); Alemayehu and Lasser, (2012); Seyoum (1996). Some other studies focus on reform efforts relating to teacher education (Dawit, 2008; Ahmed, 2013). Others treated challenges facing the country's teacher education system, (Kedir, 2005). Still, other studies dwelt on education qualities including that of teacher preparation (Workneh and Tasew, (2013).

Kedir (2005) studied contradictions, challenges, and chaos in Ethiopian Teacher Education. His findings showed that schooling and teacher preparation activities do not match in aims, practices, and conceptions. Dawit (2008) in his *Reflections on the Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) program in Ethiopia: Promises, pitfalls, and propositions*, concludes that TESO falls short of meeting its purposes mainly due to *the imbalance among program components, its permeability to ill-prepared students and the contradiction between program rhetoric and strategy and reform processes, as described by teacher educators, could be stumbling blocks which prevent TESO from fulfilling its promises* (p. 281). Ahmed, (2013) focuses upon various reforms and policies established to develop teacher education in the country.

Based on the Education and Training policy of 1994, the Ministry of Education intends teacher education programs at all levels to adopt constructivism as an approach that emphasizes greater learner

participation in the teaching-learning process. This is hoped to help teacher trainees give up the behaviorist, traditional, teacher-centered approach and gradually transform to the modern, constructivist, learner-centered practice by carrying the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they get from their training to their actual teaching practices in the schools.

Changing teachers' classroom practices has always been the number one priority of many education reform agendas throughout the world (Alsalim, 2014) the ultimate goal being the improvement of student learning and achievement. However, a mismatch between reform efforts and teacher education practices has been repeatedly echoed by several official reports as well as empirical studies (MoE, 2003; Dahlstrom and Lemma, 2008; Dawit, 2013; Kedir, 2007; Nasir and Asefa, 2011). The discrepancy is often said to have been caused by the theoretical orientations that influence the teaching practices of educators in TEIs. Since the adoption of the Education and Training Policy (TGE 1994), the Ethiopian Ministry of Education undertook two reform efforts concerning teacher education. The first reform, 'Teacher Education System Overhaul' (TESO), was planned to introduce a 'paradigm shift' where learner-centered teaching practice is to be adopted by all teacher education institutions (MoE, 2003). This reform still invisibly guides practices in teacher education colleges committed to preparing teachers for primary schools (Grades 1- 8) of the country. The second, 'Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching' (PGDT), focuses on the preparation of teachers for Grades 9-10, i.e., General secondary education (MoE, 2009). The PGDT program capitalizes on the content knowledge of candidate teachers by providing a three-year subject-based university study and teacher training of an additional one year. The PGDT program, except for a change in content, volume, and duration of delivery, also underlines the adoption of the learner-centered practice in teaching. Learner-centered practices are often associated with constructivist reform orientation while teacher-centered traditional practices represent behaviorist-orientated reform.

Constructivist teaching and learning are found on the premise that learning occurs best when the learners are actively engaged in the process of creating their meaning by integrating new information with the already existing prior knowledge (Dennick 2012). Constructivist learning is thus characterized by active involvement, a democratic learning environment, autonomy, encouragement and motivation, inquiry, problem-solving, and collaboration with others, as well as responsibility for one's learning (Gray, 1995).

In constructivist classrooms, teachers are expected to raise challenging and thought-provoking problems which are meant for students that they would explore and investigate by working in cooperative groups, developing a product, and presenting findings to their classmates (Carbonell, 2004). According to Rami, Lorenzi, and Lalor (2009), meaning cannot be imposed or transmitted by direct teaching but created by the students through their learning activities.

Behaviorist theory, however, views learning as an observable change in behavior that is affected by the environment. It supports the transmission model of teaching where the teacher dominates through a series of lectures and demonstrations that put the learners at the receptive end the teacher being part of the learning environment influences students' learning. The primary concern is on manipulating the environment that would bring about predictable behavioral change rather than focusing on the personal growth of the learners (Weegar and Pacis 2012), The behaviorist model disregards the mental development and interests of learners. The focus of behaviorist classroom instruction is mainly the coverage of content through rote memorization (Khalid and Azeem (2012),

Statement of the problem

Although over seven historical decades were spent on teacher education in Ethiopia, the approaches used in preparing teachers both in terms of quantity and quality could not escape criticisms from scholars. The

international study by Workneh and Tassew (2013) depicts that qualified teachers in the primary schools of Ethiopia are at a low proportion compared to unqualified ones. It also further revealed that teacher training modalities adopted by the education system did not give adequate emphasis to content knowledge and modern pedagogical styles. Derebsa (2006) conducted a study entitled *Tension between Traditional and Modern Teaching-Learning Approaches in Ethiopian Primary Schools* and came up with the finding that although the employment of innovative teaching and learning is emphasized in the policy, currently traditional lecture methods, in which teachers talk and students listen, dominate most classrooms. Except for Derebssa's study that focused on instructional approaches at the primary education level, I have not come across any study that has been conducted on teachers' classroom practices. We need to know about teacher educators' instructional practices that have roles to shape teaching and assessment behaviors of the trainees who end up teachers at both primary and secondary schools.

Research Questions

The current study takes the following as the main issues it desires to address:

- How Teacher educators perceive their curriculum implementation practices in Ethiopian TEIs;
- Whether there is a significant difference in teaching and assessment practices among Ethiopian teacher educators working in Colleges and Universities, and
- Whether the implementation practices align with the reform agenda of Ethiopian teacher education policy.

Method

Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey design that makes use of both quantitative and qualitative data. Survey design is adopted because it helps to collect quantitative data from a greater number of respondents which adequately represent the population of interest.

Sampling

This study compared teaching and assessment practices of 396 teacher educators drawn from 8 Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs), N=234, and 8 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), N=162, belonging to five regional states (Tigray, Amhara, Harari, Oromia, South Nations, and Nationalities and Peoples) in Ethiopia to determine whether they are implementing the teacher education curriculum by working in agreement with the reform agenda of Ethiopian teacher education policy which calls for constructivist orientation to teaching and learning.

Instruments

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were adopted which led to the collection of data through questionnaire and observation check-list.

Questionnaire

A 42-item questionnaire was prepared based on insights gained from the literature review. The reliability of the whole 42 items of the questionnaire was checked using Cronbach's alpha which produced .83. According to Cotina (1993), Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.70 is acceptable, 0.80 or greater is preferred, while higher is better. The items were then divided into Teaching Practice Subscale (TPS) containing 28 items and Assessment Practice Subscale (APS) which consisted of 14 items.

TPS statements included involving students in the learning process; making students focus on how to learn for themselves; advising students to do analysis and reasoning; engagement of learners in classroom interactions; making students relate what they learn to their teaching practicum in schools; modifying content of the lesson based on students abilities; assigning students to do and present their individual and group projects to their classmates; instructor's use of a variety of instructional techniques; identifying individual differences and accommodating them in planning lessons; regular reflection by instructors on their own teaching performances; maintaining high expectations for all students; connecting learning to real life situations; collaboration with colleagues during planning and delivery of instruction, engagement of students in collaborative learning and teaching activities; improving personal knowledge and skills through participation in professional development activities; encouragement of students to select and use different learning materials in their learning and teaching practicum; instructors' reliance on ready-made modules, exposure of students to a variety of sources such as reference materials, consultation of electronic sources of information to promote self-learning, submission of assignments at least through emails, instructors' use of electronic devices such as laptop computers and LCD Projectors; engagement of students in rote memorization, application of lecture as well as demonstration methods in classroom teaching; involving students in passive learning; adjustment of teaching to learning pace; adherence to curriculum guides while delivering instruction; adherence to rigid plans through sequencing activities; disciplining students in ways considered appropriate, etc.

APS items relate to the use of homework, assignments, and projects; forming bases of assessment on presentations of homework projects and assignments; monitoring the effectiveness of teaching through various means; arranging a time for self and/or peer-assessment; looking for correct answers in students written works or test papers; frequency of use of tests and examinations as means of assessment; use of individual and group work as measures of performance assessment; a collection of feedback through participation in peer

observation; improvement of practice based on feedback from colleagues and students; provision of immediate feedback to students on their performances; asking thought-provoking questions in classroom assessment; tolerance to student errors in written work and test papers; preference for essay items over objective items in written tests, and so on.

Items in the two subscales were further classified into three dependent variables each. Teaching Practice Subscale, for example, was classified into instructional management, instructional approaches, and technology integration dimensions. Assessment practice was analyzed on periodic use of tests, use of various continuous assessment techniques, as well as provision of immediate feedback.

Observation Checklist

To check the match or mismatch of results obtained through a questionnaire, a classroom observation checklist was prepared and used in some selected classrooms from both types of TEIs. The observation checklist consisted of 30 items each of which was rated as either *Yes*, *No*, or *Not Sure*. A *Remarks* column was maintained in the checklist against each item for the observer's additional comments. The details of items in the checklist inquired whether or not students were engaged in the learning process through a variety of means such as asking and answering oral questions; engagement in individual, pair, or group work; engagement in practical hands-on activities; oral presentations of individual and group work; whether students hold a discussion, challenge each other's ideas or that of the teacher in providing feedback to the presenters following any type of oral presentation; students' acts of technology integration in their presentations. Some of the items in the checklist asked whether students simply watch or listen to the teacher's demonstrations and/or lectures or copy down notes from whiteboards or projected screens. In addition to students' behaviors, teachers' classroom behaviors were also studied using the same observation checklist. Items related to teacher behaviors

enquired whether or not the teacher walks round class to assist students working in groups or individually; gives feedback to students' presentations and other work; whether the teacher looks for errors in students' oral activities, and then takes corrective measures, uses a variety of assessment techniques through the provision of quizzes, tests, individual activities of mild challenges and whether these activities promote critical thinking, teacher allocates time for activities and manages time properly…

Methods of Data Analysis

Responses were generated from 396 teacher educators working in 8 Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs) and 8 universities, also called Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) throughout Ethiopia, concerning the frequency with which they practiced what was presented in the statements (items) of the questionnaire. Each item in the two subscales was rated on a 5-point Lickert type scale (ranging from 5 = Always, to 1 = Never). Some of the items were negatively stated to control for consistency of responses by the educators. The negatively stated items represented behaviorist teaching and/or assessment practices, and were reverse coded while feeding data into the SPSS software. Low scores on each subscale meant the practice is traditional, more behaviorist oriented while high scores represent modern, learner-centered constructivist practices in both teaching and assessment subscales.

A three-tire analysis reference was arbitrarily adopted by the team of researchers to facilitate the analysis of quantitative data based on the following classification of mean scores.

Table 1: Reference for Analysis

Mean score range	Level /Frequency of practice	Meaning adopted for interpretation
1.00 – 2.49	Low/Bad/Almost Never	Behaviorist, Traditional, Teacher-centered practice
2.50 – 3.49	Medium/Neutral/sometimes	Eclectic, mixed, both behaviorist & constructivist practice
3.50 – 5.0	High/Good/Almost always	Constructivist, modern, Learner-centered practice

Source: Arbitrarily described by Team of Researchers

Data collected through the questionnaire were entered into the SPSS version 21 software to generate quantitative data which were organized in the form of tables and figures. The data thus organized was then analyzed using mean scores, t-test, F test (one-way analysis of variance), and correlation coefficients. The decision to reject the null hypothesis was set at P = 0.05 level of significance.

Background of the Respondents

There was a total of 396 respondents belonging to 8 universities and 8 Teacher Education Colleges. In terms of gender, 84.8% were males while females constitute only 15’2%. In terms of age, 76.1% are in the age category of above 31 years the average age being 28.8 years. Qualification wise less than 10% have terminal degrees while 20.2% hold BA/BSc degrees. About 70.1% serve with a Master’s degree. Concerning fields of specialization, 17.4% were from language studies, 22% are with a mathematics background, 25% belong to natural sciences while the rest 34% belong to social science and education.

Results

Mean scores were calculated and one-way ANOVA was computed on the average scores for the teaching and assessment practice subscales to see if there were any significant differences between the means of the educators working in the TEIs. From among the colleges of teacher education: Harar, Hossana, Debre Berhan, Jimma, Dessie, Hawassa, Abi- Addi, and Assella CTEs were involved in the study.

Table 2: Teaching Practices by College Educators

CTE	Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	P
8 Colleges of Teacher Education	Instructional Management	234	4.0313	.47317	4.244	.000
	Instructional Approaches	234	4.1395	.45235	4.253	.000
	Technology integration	234	4.0449	.66416	3.704	.001
	Overall Teaching Practice	234	4.0719	.45572	4.843	.000

Teaching practice was evaluated along three dimensions: *Instructional management, instructional approaches, and technology integration.* Concerning instructional management practice, a one-way analysis of variance was run to see if there is a statistically significant difference among the teacher educators working in the 8 CTEs. The result (F=4.24; and p=.000) indicated that there is a statistically significant difference among the practices of teacher educators working in the CTEs. The difference is attributed to Hossana CTE compared to Dessie and Abi-Adi colleges of teacher education. The grand mean (4.03) shows that the teacher educators in all the colleges were good at managing instruction following constructivist prescription. Detailed analysis witnesses that instructors try to maintain good interpersonal relationships with their students. They identify individual differences and take time to reflect on their performances. The educators also spend time engaging in

continuous professional development activities through action research and developing flexible plans. The teacher educators engage their students in learning tasks by differentiating activities according to learner needs. There is also collaboration among instructors of the same department regarding the exchange of ideas, planning, and delivery of instruction. In managing instruction, the teacher educators also make good use of time and resources by ensuring the meaningful engagement of learners in learning activities.

Instructional approaches are usually dichotomously classified into a teacher or learner-centered categories. Delivery approaches used by the teacher educators were measured by eliciting responses on 14 items. Except for Dessie and Abi-Adi CTEs whose scores are relatively low, Hossana, Assella, and Harar are among the best performers in applying a variety of instructional delivery approaches. The mean difference ($F = 4.25$; $p = .000$) was significant for Hossana compared to Dessie and Abi-adi. The grand mean value of 4.14 shows that most of the educators are pro constructivism in the manipulation of various instructional methods. In trying to deliver the contents of lessons over to learners, the instructors involve their students in the learning processes by engaging them in the active construction of knowledge through doing analysis and synthesis as well as finding solutions to the learning activities. In active learning classrooms, the learners are made to share their individual and group projects by holding classroom interaction. Learning teaching methods are often chosen based on the nature of content and learning tasks in ways that minimize the use of lecture as a dominant strategy. Teacher educators belonging to all surveyed colleges support the constructivist reform effort and their overall score ($M=4.14$) is high. That means, the teacher educators in all colleges, despite the significance of difference noted among their mean scores almost always select and apply a variety of learning methods whereby learners take an active role in interacting with contents of various subjects.

Technology integration practices of teacher educators were also compared along with the 8 colleges. Multiple comparison of mean values yielded F = 3.70; P= 0.001 which is significant at alpha = .05 level. Debre Berhan scored a relatively better mean value of (4.31) compared to Dessie, Harar, and Abi-Adi. The grand mean for technology integration identifies the educators as supporters of constructivist implementation. Technology integration was measured by surveying instructors' reliance on ready-made modules, exposure of students to a variety of sources such as reference materials, consultation of electronic sources of information to promote self-learning, submission of assignments at least through emails, instructors' use of electronic devices such as laptop computers and LCD Projectors. Five of the CTEs witnessed their inclination towards constructivist technology integration practice by scoring higher than the grand mean (4.04). Despite educators' claim to have integrated technology into their lessons, classroom observations conducted in some college classrooms did not show the prevalence of technology in such an activity.

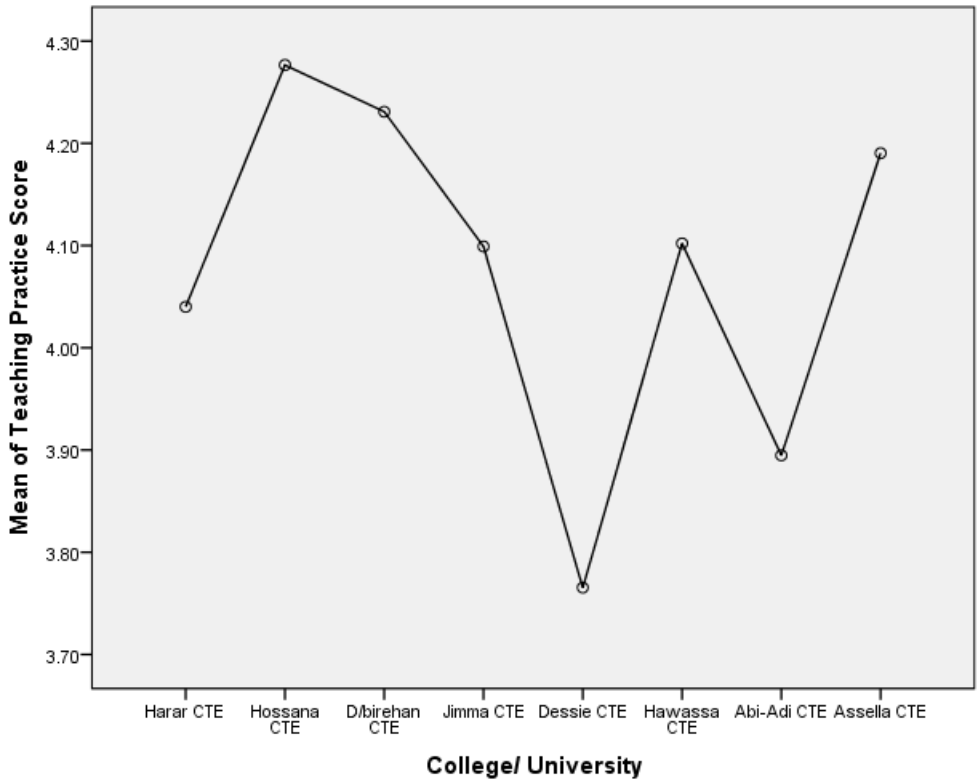

Figure 1: Overall Teaching Practice Scores of College Educators

Scores on overall TPS were calculated for all CTE instructors. Comparison of means shows that Hossana CTE (*Figure 1*) followed by D/Berhan, Assella, Hawassa, and Jimma scored higher than the grand mean (M=4.07; F=4.84; p=.00) which was statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The mean difference is attributed to Hosanna and D/Berhan compared to Dessie and Abi-Adi CTEs. It would be safe to conclude that most of the educators in the colleges of teacher education scored high which is an indicator of their constructivist-oriented implementation of the teacher education curricula in their respective institutes. That means the educators were good at managing the instructional environment, in the

choice of alternative methods and techniques of teaching. Their practice relating to technology integration in the learning and teaching process as well as encouraging their trainees to carry these practices over to their teaching practicum in the schools is also good.

Table 3: Assessment Practices of College Instructors

CTE	Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	P
8 Colleges of Teacher Education	Use of Periodic Tests	234	3.3946	.81857	2.758	.009
	Formative Continuous Assessment	234	4.1132	.66568	4.043	.000
	Immediate Feedback	234	4.0228	.67974	1.265	.269
	Overall Assessment Practice	234	3.8436	.54336	2.736	.010

Table 3 presents the status of the use of periodic tests; employment of formative continuous assessment as means of assessing trainees' performance as well as provision of immediate feedback. Except for D/Berhan and Hawassa who scored relatively better than the grand mean (3.39), none of the CTEs took identified position as to whether they are behaviorist or constructivist in using tests. Thus, the teacher educators preferred to be neutral or eclectic in their assessment concerning the use of tests. Eclectic educators are expected to make occasional use of tests combined with other means of measuring students' performances and learning progress.

Whether or not the educators make use of formative continuous assessment was the purpose served by Table 3. Assella CTE followed by Hossana and Jimma assume a better position comparable to Dessie and Harar in adopting different forms of assessment continuously. The aggregate mean score (M=4.11) makes most instructors of all colleges demonstrate good practice in employing formative continuous assessment to assist their students to learn better. It can be speculated

that these educators assess students almost always using individual and group assignments, portfolio assessment, etc. with minimum use of tests as the measure for learning progress.

Assessment for learning always works well when accompanied by immediate feedback. Assessment helps both students and teachers improve their learning teaching behaviors. Assessment best meets its purpose when feedback is given or collected immediately. Feedback is believed to help all students on equal footing. Better performing students continue working with their observed strengths and achieve better in the future while less performing ones might also take measures to overcome weaknesses and work for improvement. D/Berhan and Hawassa take the lead in providing immediate feedback to their students after every assessment effort. Dessie and Harar are also performing well despite their relatively low mean scores. The grand mean (M=4.02; F=1.26; and p=.269) shows that most educators of all colleges almost always exert similar efforts at providing feedback to their trainees.

Investigation of the assessment practices of teacher educators of the surveyed colleges indicates that reliance on written tests also forms the basis of assessment for learning but it is not the sole means for most educators. The application of formative continuous assessment which capitalizes on the use of different techniques seems to have guided the practice of educators. A close look at the mean score (M=3.84; F=2.73; p=.001) of the surveyed instructors shows that after every assessment effort the educators almost always provide the students with immediate feedback that has a constructive effect on the learning behaviors of the trainees. Although most instructors tend to use formative continuous assessment and provide immediate feedback on almost a regular basis following the administration of every assessment, the magnitude of efforts exerted by each college is different, the mean differences were significant for D/Berhan versus Harar and Abi-Adi colleges.

Table 4: Relationship of Teaching and Assessment Practices of College Educators

Correlations			
		Teaching Practice Score	Assessment Practice Score
Teaching Practice Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.667**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	234	234
Assessment Practice Score	Pearson Correlation	.667**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	234	234

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

To see if the teaching and assessment practices of educators working in colleges of teacher education demonstrate any relationship, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated. The result indicates that there is substantial positive relationship (r= .667; p= .000) which is significant at .01 level. It could be concluded that 44.5% of the variance is explained by the influence of the teaching practices on the assessment behaviors of the CTE instructors.

Analysis of University Educators' Teaching and Assessment Practices

Teaching practices of university-level teacher educators were analyzed using the same framework of analysis employed with college teacher educators. The universities covered by this study include Hawassa, Mekele, Bahir Dar, Wollo, Wollega, Dilla, Haramaya, and Jimma. Instructional management was among the dependent variables for measuring teaching practice. As shown in Table 4, their level of instructional management is neither low nor high. The grand mean (3.23; SD=.30) for 8 universities indicates that the instructors tend to be neutral and adopt both behaviorist and constructivist implementation in managing instruction. It is, therefore, easy to conclude that educators in these universities do not have a specified theoretical orientation of teaching, but rather tend to demonstrate eclectic practice.

Table 5: Teaching Practices of University Instructors

HEI	Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	P
8 Higher Education Institutions	Instructional Management	162	3.2310	.30713	5.359	.000
	Instructional Approaches	162	3.6680	.36478	3.307	.003
	Technology integration	162	3.3241	.69709	8.323	.000
	Overall Teaching Practice	162	3.4078	.33399	9.556	.000

Though most of the educators tend to be eclectic in their adoption of theories, there is a distinction among the universities that the test of mean difference (F=5.35; P= .000) was significant at the .05 level for Wollega followed by Dilla and Hawassa universities. Based on this result, it may be concluded that the teacher educators at the universities sometimes identify individual differences to make adjustments to their planning and teaching; they sometimes consult with other colleagues and reflect on their performances as they find appropriate. Although they tend to engage students in the learning processes, the university teacher educators do not make good management of time and other resources on regular basis. Thus, they assume a neutral position in their choice of theories that guide their practice.

Concerning the choice of instructional approaches, Haramaya is good at making use of a variety of learning teaching methods and almost always ensures the involvement of learners in classroom instructional activities. They encourage learners to do analysis and synthesis of ideas rather than engaging in rote memorization of ready-made content presented to them in learning modules or through the oral presentation by instructors themselves. Most of the educators in the rest of the 7 universities tend to do the selection of methods without holding a dominant theoretical orientation. They sometimes choose to be behaviorist and at other times constructivist, meaning that they make use of lecture and demonstration

methods which are typical of teacher-centered traditional methods, while at the same time giving some opportunities to their learners to engage in different activities and eventually learn how to learn with little intervention by the educators themselves. While most of the educators chose to be constructivist in their choice of instructional approaches, the test of significance indicated that there is a statistically significant difference between the groups of educators working in the different universities. Haramaya University excelled in the choice and use of a variety of instructional approaches that are of learner-centered type than did those in Wollo University.

Technology helps educators not only to enhance the learning process but also to understand the learning needs of their trainees. It is often believed that technology heightens the interest of students and promotes student collaboration in learning. Technology integration was one dimension of teaching practice investigated in this research. Haramaya University is among the two top scorers including Dilla. These universities seem to integrate technology on an almost daily basis, while the rest do this sometimes. At some other times, the educators belonging to Hawassa, Mekele, Bahir Dar, Wollega, Wollo, and Jimma universities seem to neglect the integration of technology in teaching their subjects to their trainees. Beyond being eclectic in trying to integrate instructional technologies themselves, the educators do not urge their trainees to use similar materials during their teaching practicum in schools. The test of significance ($F=8.23$; $P=.000$) indicated that there is a statistically significant difference among the means of six universities compared to that of Haramaya and Dilla.

Except for Haramaya and Dilla (Figure 2) who scored a better mean value (3.5 or above) and lean towards constructivism, most of the university teacher educators were neither behaviorist nor constructivist oriented. None of them remained either pure behaviorist or constructivist in teaching practice. Relating to instructional management, Wollega and Dilla universities have good practice. Haramaya and Wollega appear to be better in the choice of instructional methods that focus on learner

participation. These two universities are also identified as being good technology integrators compared to the whole group of educators. Educators in the rest of the universities need to focus attention on instructional management, adoption of good practices in the choice of learner-centered approaches, and integration of technology in their teaching so that teacher trainees might emulate good behaviors and carry them to the teaching practicum in schools. An overall observation of the teaching practices in the surveyed universities would suggest that most teacher educators are striving to support the reform effort by gradually moving out of behaviorist-oriented practice.

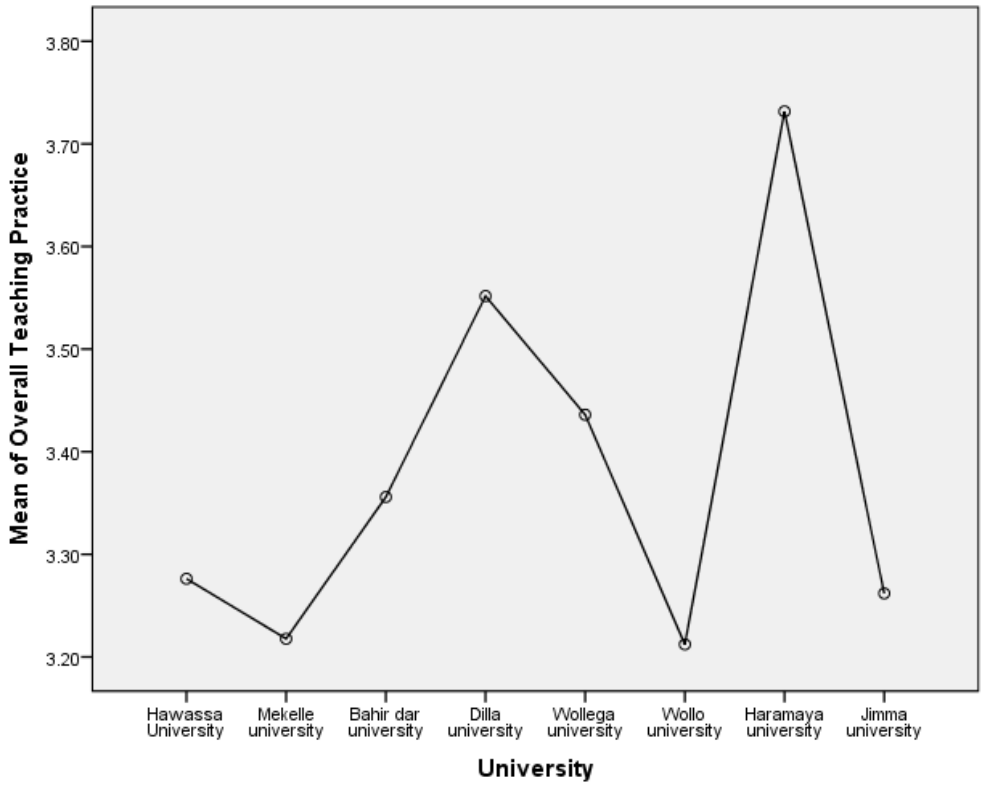

Figure 2: Overall Teaching Practices of University Instructors

Table 6: Assessment Practices of University Instructors (8 Universities)

HEIs	Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	P
8 Higher Education Institutions	Use of Periodic Tests	162	3.3045	.45105	.462	.860
	Formative Continuous Assessment	162	4.0216	.69459	4.361	.000
	Immediate Feedback	162	3.6646	.78679	4.361	.000
	Overall Assessment Practice	162	3.6636	.49153	5.596	.000

Assessment is a constant appraisal, judgment, and analysis of students' performance through the uninterrupted collection of information about learning and teaching. Assessment is often considered as an instrument that shapes teaching practices as well as the ways students learn content as well as associated skills and attitudes. The traditional assessment focuses on measuring the amount of learning while modern practice aims at facilitating the how of learning. The use of tests as means of assessment capitalizes on measuring the volume of content acquired by students than focusing on the quality of learning. In using tests as criteria for assessment, students usually focus on convergent thinking of contents already covered than doing synthesis and analysis for new learning.

Analysis of the educators' perceptions concerning the use of tests (M=3.30; F=.462; P= .860)) indicates that all educators hold a similar view that test is not the only way of assessing student performances on regular basis, but a practice adopted sometimes. That means the educators unanimously opt for other methods and techniques as supplements to tests to identify strengths and weaknesses and make adjustments to the improvement of students' learning.

Continuous assessment is a frequent and timely formative assessment of student progress that aims at identifying learning needs and adjusting teaching behaviors as necessary. It provides opportunities to educators to meet diverse learning needs and thereafter adapts teaching to individual learning needs. The grand mean (4.02) shows that most teacher educators almost always capitalize on the application of continuous assessment techniques. Comparison of mean differences through one-way analysis of variance (F= 4.361; P = .000) shows that there is a statistically significant difference among the universities in terms of applying continuous assessment. Haramaya, Wollega, and Dilla Universities hold better positions as compared to Jimma in terms of applying different forms of formative assessment. It would be easy to conclude that instructors in these three universities assess the performances of their trainees by involving them in self and peer assessment, individual and group works, setting thought-provoking questions in the different assessment tools, asking essay type questions that lend themselves to divergent answers that encourage multiple responses based on diversity of understanding.

Students need to receive appropriate and focused feedback that is constructive, developmental, and provided timely as early as possible to improve their learning. Immediate feedback gives learners impetus to review their areas of weakness and act on them to enhance learning and performance in the future. Educators also need to collect feedback to identify areas of their strengths and weaknesses to inform and improve their teaching practices. In addition to formal, teacher-led assessment, students may be given opportunities to self-assess themselves individually and also peer-assessed by their classmates. Promoting a variety of assessment techniques will undoubtedly create a platform whereby each individual learner becomes self-critical in thinking and plan measures to be taken following the received feedback. Close observation of data on the provision of feedback by teacher educators shows that a good number of them give feedback to their trainees without much delay. While many educators (91 out of 162) working in five universities were not sure of doing this on regular basis, those in

Wollega and Dilla excel in providing immediate feedback followed by Haramaya University. The analysis of variance (F = 4.361; P = .000) showed the existence of a statistically significant difference between Wollega and Hawassa as well as Dilla and Hawassa universities. The cumulative practice of the educators (M= 3.66) suggests that feedback is provided almost always following each and every assessment with the purpose of informing and empowering students to regulate their learning and achievement by closing gaps between their current status and acceptable level of performance. Such instructors continuously assess and provide feedback as an integral part of better student learning.

Overview of educators' assessment practices (indicated by M=3.66) indicates that assessment is almost always employed as an integral part of the learning and teaching process. Concerning the use of tests as a means of assessment, most instructors show that a test is not the sole method of assessment, but a supplement to other techniques. Instead of relying on periodic tests, the educators capitalize on continuously assessing their trainees using a variety of assessment instruments. While the educators support the reform effort by making use of continuous assessment almost every time parallel to teaching, and also providing immediate feedback to their learners on outcomes of assessment, comparison between the magnitude of the practice of continuous assessment and provision of feedback differ significantly. To strike balance between the two, educators working in five of the universities need to improve their practice relating to feedback provision.

Table 7: Relationship between Teaching and Assessment Practices of University Educators

		Teaching Practice	Assessment Practice
Teaching Practice	Pearson Correlation	1	.480**
	Sig. (2 tailed)		.000
	N		162
Assessment Practice	Pearson Correlation	.480**	1
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.000	
	N	162	162

**Correlation is significant at .01 level

Whether or not there exists a relationship between the teaching and assessment practices of teacher educators working in the universities, Pearson product-moment correlation was calculated the result of which shows the prevalence of moderate relationship between the two variables which is positive and significant (.480; p=.000). The teaching practices of the university educators had an influence over their assessment practices. About 23% of the variance is explained by the interaction between the teaching practices with assessment practice.

Table 8: Comparison of Teaching Practices of College and University Educators

Teaching Practice Variables	TEI	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	P
Instructional Management	College	234	4.0313	.47317	18.94	.000
	University	162	3.2310	.30713		
Instructional Approach	College	234	4.1395	.45235	11.02	.000
	University	162	3.6680	.36478		
Technology integration	College	234	4.0449	.66416	10.41	.000
	University	162	3.3241	.69709		
Overall Teaching Practice	College	234	4.0719	.45572	15.83	.000
	University	162	3.4078	.33399		

Comparison of teaching practices between colleges and universities of teacher education reveal that on all the three variables of teaching practice, the colleges are in support of the reform effort in managing instruction and integrating technologies in teaching and learning processes than did universities. The two types of TEIs are on the same track in the choice of constructivist instructional approaches. However, the tests of mean differences were significant along with all variables of teaching practice in favor of the teacher education colleges. Despite the noted differences, no university remained purely behaviorist but strived hard to catch up with constructivist implementation practice. Teacher educators of the Ethiopian universities may need to work diligently to improve their instructional management and technology integration practices to completely agree with the sought reform.

Table 9: Assessment Practices of Colleges and Universities

Assessment practice Variables	TEI	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	P
Use of test	College	234	3.3946	.81857	1.27	.204
	University	162	3.3045	.45105		
Continuous	College	234	4.1132	.66568	1.32	.187
Assessment	University	162	4.0216	.69459		
Provision of	College	234	4.0228	.67974	4.83	.000
Feedback	University	162	3.6646	.78679		
Overall	College	234	3.8436	.54336	3.67	.001
Assessment	University	162	3.6636	.49153		
Practice						

Concerning assessment practices, both colleges and universities of teacher education demonstrated similar results in terms of using tests and continuous assessment. The colleges and universities chose to be eclectic in their philosophies of using tests as measures of learning progress. That means, they sometimes employ tests but not regularly. Rather they supplement the use of tests with other continuous assessment techniques, which they use almost always. Concerning the provision of immediate feedback, the two types of institutions perceived themselves as providers of timely feedback following every assessment activity. However, the test of mean difference ($t = 4.83$; $P = .000$) produced a statistically significant difference between the Teacher Education institutions, where colleges take a lion's share in providing feedback rather than did university educators. In an overall assessment, both of them inclined towards constructivism, but still, colleges are superior ($t = 3.67$; $P = .001$) to the universities in providing immediate feedback following each assessment activity.

Results from Classroom observation

To see the alignment between teachers' self-reports data collected through the questionnaire and their immediate teaching and assessment practices, observations were conducted in one university and four

college classrooms. Many instructors were requested to allow data collectors to enter and observe their classroom lessons, but only five volunteered for the activity. The observers sat at the back corners of the rooms and conducted observations guided by a 30 items checklist. Potential students' and teachers' classroom behaviors were included in the checklist which was then rated as either *Yes*, *No*, or *Not Sure*. The observation data witnessed that in many of these classrooms, teachers raised introductory oral questions as means of summarizing previous days' lessons to which volunteering students reacted by raising hands and taking turns. In addition to the oral teacher questions, one college instructor asked students to take out their portfolios and read their work to the class students. The teacher called upon a few students by name at random and gave them opportunities for presenting their assigned tasks. Most of the students were however denied such an opportunity for unspecified reasons.

As methods of presenting the lessons, individual and group work were common in these classrooms. The individual work only served as a stepping stone for group formation. There was no opportunity given to individuals to share their work with the rest of the class except that they discussed in pairs as well as in groups of four to six individuals.

When students were engaged in group discussions, the instructors moved around each group, coached, and provided support to students by clarifying the essence of challenging tasks. Most of the group discussions were allotted a specified time ranging from 5 to 15 minutes depending on the content and difficulty of problems students were required to solve. Poor time management was observed among two instructors; one of them allowed the students to work long beyond the allotted time while the other made the students stop working five minutes ahead of the time originally prescribed.

Representatives of each group held presentations at the whole class level during which teachers encouraged discussions whereby the students raised their questions, challenged each other's ideas, and

made reflections on critical comments. The oral presentations and ensuing discussions covered fifteen to twenty-five minutes of the lesson time. Variations are due to the number of groups formed, the length of time allocated for the presentation of each group, and the nature of tasks covered.

Following the discussions held at the whole class level, instructors made summaries of the lessons by asking thought-provoking questions and giving feedback to the presentations made by groups. In no classroom were the instructors observed criticizing wrong ideas or praising students who provided correct responses. When students failed to supply the expected answers, the instructors did not even try to give correct answers themselves except raising more questions that trigger thinking and reasoning that would eventually lead to the discovery of the likely solutions through students' efforts. In none of the classrooms were quizzes used and/or tests administered as techniques of assessment.

Lectures were very much minimized in all the observed classrooms except during introduction and summary sessions. There was no demonstration made by the instructors. Nearly over two-thirds of the time available for lessons was covered through the students' activities such as individual, group, and whole class. The series of methods used included lecture – question and answer - individual brainstorming - pair workgroup discussions – instructor-facilitated whole class sharing and discussions – as well as teacher feedback and lecture.

While oral discussions were almost the standard norm for the classroom teaching practices in the observed lessons, hands-on activity was noted in a university laboratory where students experimented with some apparatus and chemicals. Except for this classroom where laboratory resources were exploited for practical students' activities, the instructors neither integrated technologies nor did they organize and engage students in practical hands-on activities.

The observation results and the teacher educators' perceptions of their teaching and assessment practices reported through the questionnaire are very much similar and agree with the constructivist beliefs. Minimized use of lecture and facilitation of learner-centered activities, elongated use of group discussion, and engagement of all students in the class discussion following group work presentations and application of different methods and techniques of learning during the instructional process is aligned with the constructivist teaching and learning principles. Furthermore, the use of portfolio assessment (though observed in only one classroom), the provision of immediate feedback, the raising of questions by instructors that facilitate thinking and reasoning rather than looking for correct answers, all align with constructivist assessment for learning. It is thus safe to conclude that the teaching and assessment practices of teacher educators go in line with constructivist orientation. However, failure to integrate technology in classroom instruction as well as the absence of practical hands-on activities remain to be gaps that all teacher educators need to re-visit.

Discussion

The whole effort so far was to identify whether or not the Ethiopian teacher educators who are engaged in preparing primary and secondary school teachers are carrying out their curriculum implementation roles following the teacher education reform policy currently in force across teacher education institutions of the country. While college-level educators are in support of the reform effort by being relatively pure constructivists, those at the university level chose to follow a blend of the two opposing theories. However, educators at both levels demonstrated constructivist, learner-centered models of instructional strategies except that some variations were noted in the practice of technology integration among the two groups. Although elements of constructivism are evident in the overall teaching and assessment practices, significant differences were evident among instructors teaching at college and university levels. A simple explanation may be that the personal characteristics such as training backgrounds and beliefs of instructors are different, which in turn

affect their practices. The environmental contexts in which the teacher education institutions operate are also not the same. The findings of this study go in line with the claims by Lew (2010) who argues that teacher preparation programs play a significant role in that those trained along the constructivist line would likely continue to practice the same in teaching. Regarding the influence of context on teaching practices, Hos and Kekec, (2014) affirm that classroom realities, coupled with teacher beliefs, create a mismatch between intended reform and observed practices in teaching. Vavrus (2003) also argues that the cultural, economic, and political dimensions of teachers' practice need to be considered alongside efforts to reform the country's educational system. Similarly, Rossi (2009) contends that eclecticism in approach between behaviorist and constructivist strategies is the result of subject matter and contextual differences. According to this author, a significantly higher level of behaviorist practice (less reform-oriented) was reported by instructors from the USA, and instructors with academic degrees in mathematics and engineering. In their review of education reforms, Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008) conclude heterogeneity of teachers and classroom contexts requires flexibility in curriculum implementation to adapt to individual contexts.

Conclusion

The majority of college instructors witnessed the constructivist-oriented, learner-centered implementation of teaching practices in their respective institutes, by managing instruction, selecting, and integrating active learning instructional methods and technologies, while none of those in the universities remained either pure behaviorist or constructivist in overall teaching practice.

All groups of teacher educators without making the significance of difference capitalize on the application of formative continuous assessment techniques on an almost regular basis. Both groups of educators favor constructivist theoretical orientation in providing immediate feedback to their trainees, but college-level educators

emerged somehow superior to their university counterparts in overall assessment practice. For both College and University level educators, teaching practices had moderate to substantial influence on their assessment practices. Generally, the study concludes that the curriculum implementation practices of Ethiopian teacher educators nearly go in line with the reform policy governing this sector of education but not up to the desired level.

Recommendations

Teacher educators working in both colleges and universities need to revisit their teaching and assessment practices to fully catch up with the sought reform.

Future research may need to use a variety of tools to verify the truthfulness of claims made by the educators. Further research is needed to study why differences exist among the teaching and assessment practices of teacher educators working at different levels.

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