

FULL-LENGTH ARTICLE**Postgraduate Students' and Instructors' Satisfaction and Challenges Encounter in the Implementation of Teaching English As A Foreign Language (TEFL) Programs at Selected Ethiopian Public Research Universities****Temesgen Mereba* and Tewodros Zeleke**Department of English Language and Literature, College of Social Sciences and Humanities,
Jimma University, Jimma, Ethiopia*Corresponding author: temesgen.mereba@ju.edu.et**ABSTRACT**

Service provider institutions must understand their customers' needs and challenges to gather effective feedback and improve their services. This is true for higher learning institutions, as well. Thus, the current study aimed at assessing postgraduate students' and their instructors' level of satisfaction with the implementation of postgraduate programs in teaching English as a foreign language and the challenges they encounter in randomly sampled four Ethiopian public research universities. A descriptive design was used to carry out the study and 82 students and 48 instructors (a total of 126) were selected as participants of the study using availability sampling technique. The required data were obtained via both closed and open-ended items of questionnaires (one questionnaire for students and another for instructors) and the data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The study identified the level of satisfaction of instructors and post graduate students in the implementation of Teaching English as a Foreign Language program. It showed that instructors' satisfaction in relation to monitoring the implementation of the postgraduate programs was found to be at a medium level. The majority of the students were less satisfied with the administrative services in the area of infrastructure, material and financial resources. The serious challenges identified were found to be problems of infrastructure, facilities and financial resource limitations. Finally, finding solutions for the identified limitations in the area of availing appropriate infrastructure, providing adequate and accessible resource centers and addressing participants' payment requests are recommended.

Keywords: Challenge; Implementation; Postgraduate; Program; Satisfaction; Service**INTRODUCTION**

Launching and running postgraduate programs in higher learning institutions is essential to produce skilled human resources. As it is suggested by Potter (1992), most experienced universities of developed countries have shown great progress in delivering postgraduate programs. Besides, it is a well-known fact that many developing countries are sending their brilliant first-degree holders to the developed world for further education (Ekpoh, 2017; and Ekpenyoung, 2022) and only a few of these scholars return to their home countries escaping from the brain drain practice. Added to the few professionals going back from abroad, the third-world countries have tried their best to train their human resources in their universities by establishing postgraduate programs.

In Ethiopia, as well, a lot of postgraduate programs have been launched in various fields to satisfy the high demand for professionals. Thus, the country has launched higher education programs in about 50 public universities and 200 private higher institutions in the various regions of the country (Wondwosen, 2020) though the expansion in quantity tends to result in questioning the quality.

According to the report made by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (2018), almost all of the universities have already started training candidates in postgraduate programs. Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), thus, is one of the programs that were launched at the postgraduate level in the majority of the universities. This level of postgraduate education in TEFL has become one of the areas from which the country demands a lot due to the

establishment of many new universities in the country and due to the quality of English language education expected at secondary schools.

Furthermore, in the Ethiopian higher education sector, English language is a medium of instruction. It is also a target language which is a compulsory subject taught at all school levels. Still further, all of the universities in Ethiopia require instructors that have at least a Master of Arts (MA) degree in TEFL as a minimum requirement in order to deliver the common courses in various colleges (Higher Education Proclamation, 2009). Moreover, the demand for third-degree (PhD) holders in TEFL especially in the universities which have PhD programs in TEFL is so high that supervising researchers is done and all of the PhD courses are delivered by such qualified professionals.

Significant change has taken place in launching and expanding higher education in Ethiopia. Regarding this, Trines (2018) and Tebeje (2018) remarked that though access to quality tertiary education in Ethiopia remains severely constrained, great improvement has been observed in its quantity. As indicated by Trines (2018), "tertiary education in Ethiopia remains elitist" (P. 6) to show that most of the programs offered in the higher education institutes (HEIs) mainly focus only on the theory developed in many social and natural science fields which means issues of relevance, skills development, etc. are questioned.

Consequently, the need to address programs like postgraduate programs in teaching English gradually emerged in the Ethiopian higher learning institutions. With regard to calling English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) in the Ethiopian context, the issue is related to whether or not English is used for communication for various real life purposes in the community at large. To the researchers' knowledge, if English is taught in classrooms and the community at large uses it for communication, it is called ESL. However, if it is taught only in classrooms and the community outside of the classrooms does not use it, then it is called EFL. So in the Ethiopian context, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) and thus, the researchers used the term teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) in the current study.

For higher learning institutions, only launching a postgraduate program is not enough. After launching, the success or failure, strengths and/or challenges encountered in implementing the programs need to be assessed from different aspects. In general, the programs could be studied in terms of a lot of factors like the infrastructure, technology use, skillful and adequate staff, education quality, candidates' engagement, customers' satisfaction, teaching and learning styles and techniques, challenges encountered, etc.

For more elaboration, in teaching English as a foreign language at the tertiary level, the Ethiopian public research universities running postgraduate programs in TEFL are investing a lot in the implementation of the programs. However, the success and gaps observed in implementing the programs are not much studied and hence, adequate and in-depth empirical evidence tend to be lacking. Thus, from the unstudied factors, the current study embarked on studying the *satisfaction* level of the postgraduate students and their instructors and the *challenges* of different degree they encounter in the implementation of the programs.

The construct 'Satisfaction' in the context of the current study refers to TEFL postgraduate students' and instructors' sense of fulfillment of their needs, expectations, desires, and achievement in quality teaching/learning that take place in Ethiopian higher learning institutions. From the researchers' practical point of view and observation, in the Ethiopian higher learning institutions there are different structures among which the major two are the academic and administrative wings that provide various services meant to satisfy their postgraduate students and instructors. They provide complemental services for successful implementation of the postgraduate programs.

The academic wing or sector provides all the academic services pertinent to teaching and learning which are done by the academic staff and their supporting staff. The services or activities include the teaching and learning (online and offline), guiding or supervising research activities, providing library

and laboratory services. Dealing with assignments and providing feedback, examination and grade processing including grade reporting are other academic services or activities. Furthermore, conducting graduate seminars, symposiums, etc. are other relevant academic activities.

On the other hand, there are a number of services provided by the administrative wing in the higher learning institutions. This section avails and manages classrooms whether the conventional ones or the smart classrooms. It also puts in place libraries and laboratories so that they are functional. It is responsible for carrying on procurement activities, availing and managing educational equipments and other relevant material resources. Human resource and financial management services are rendered by this particular section. Facilitating power and water supply and telecommunication services are the responsibilities of this wing. Furthermore, it is responsible for sanitation, maintenance, transportation, security, etc. services. Such services are rendered so that the teaching and learning which is pillar of the institutions would be successful.

For further elaboration, various plants, firms, industries, institutions, etc. which are meant for general or specific purposes are in competition. Whatever services they provide, they need to win the needs and expectations of their customers to survive in the market of competition because, in competition, only the fittest survive. Regarding the role of customers and their satisfaction, Sapri, et al. (2009) argue that customers are very essential for any institution, be it a private or public enterprise or organization. Thus, students' and instructors' satisfaction plays an important role in providing feedback in relation to the service quality of higher education institutions.

In general terms, the construct customers' satisfaction and the implementation of the stated programs are likely to have a direct relationship. That means when customers of the programs are satisfied, it is an indication of the success of the programs. The customers themselves are also motivated and encouraged to accomplish their tasks in the programs. When the issue is contextualized to the role of Students satisfaction', Wong and Chapman (2023) have the following to say: "In higher education (HE) student satisfaction is vital both for the success of the institution and for that of the individual students..." (P. 957).

To move to the second variable of this study, it needs operationalizing the variable encountered '*challenges*' which deals with a number of educational problems (that is, difficulties, obstacles, limitations, hinderances, gaps etc.) observed during the execution of TEFL postgraduate programs. As reported by Trines (2018), though huge action is being taken to increase access to education in Ethiopia's education system on the one hand, crisis is being sensed on the other hand, due to lack of quality and this could be one of the challenges.

Furthermore, there could be multiple factors that challenge the implementation of the TEFL postgraduate programs. Administration and coordination of the postgraduate programs are liable to various challenges arising from individual, administrative and environmental factors (Hadi, 2019). From the researchers' practical experiences and observation, for instance, some frontline educational service providers and members of the leadership at different levels might lack enough awareness and readiness in running the programs and this could result in challenges in implementation of the programs. Other gaps like inadequate budget and financial resources, infrastructural and technological problems, etc. could be some of the major challenges that the stakeholders of the programs encounter. Thus, it was relevant to study the actual challenges encountered in the implementation of TEFL postgraduate programs.

According to Bethalem (2018), a shortage of specialized professionals is observed in some public universities. Furthermore, scarcity in supplementing the progress of these programs via research is observed in Ethiopia. Because of inconsistencies in coordinating and monitoring postgraduate programs, some universities have been observed tending to lose their reputations retained for many years. Besides, irregularities have been observed in delivering some postgraduate programs (Wondwosen, 2020).

Regarding more studies conducted on postgraduate programs, Kaur & Kaur (2009), for instance, conducted a study on “A Quality Study on Postgraduate Students’ Learning Experience”. The study focuses on the task of ‘evaluating the student learning experience in postgraduate education’. It gives due emphasis to the quality of postgraduate education in line with learners’ learning. However, the study does not raise issues related to the students and their instructors’ satisfaction and the challenges they encounter in the implementation of TEFL postgraduate programs.

Another study to address is the study conducted by Bethlehem (2018) entitled: “Quality of postgraduate level education: the case of Addis Ababa University and St. Mary’s University”. The study focuses on the delivery of quality postgraduate education in the selected two higher institutions. The result of the study showed that quality postgraduate education is provided by the addressed universities to the candidates. However, the study does not address a specific field.

Wong and Chapman (2023) conducted a study entitled ‘Student Satisfaction and Interaction in Higher Education’ in Singapore. A total of 275 students of one of the largest higher education institutions in the country participated. They were requested to show their level of student satisfaction aspects: satisfaction with program, teaching of lecturers, institution, campus facilities, student support provided, own learning, overall university experiences and life as a university student in general. Finally, the result showed that the respondents were most satisfied with two of the academic aspects stated as ‘program’ and ‘teaching of the lecturers’ the mean scores of which were the highest among all the eight student satisfaction aspects presented.

The above four studies conducted on the postgraduate programs focused on the issue of quality education provision. However, they are not field-specific. In addition, none of them addressed the variables participants’ satisfaction and the challenges they encounter taken together. To fill such a gap, the current study tried to focus on investigating TEFL postgraduate students’ and instructors’ level of satisfaction and the challenges they encounter in the implementation of the programs.

Thus, to frame the study and display the two variables of the study which are already operationalized above, having a conceptual framework of the study seems to be relevant and important. The framework helps in representing the study variables and the study process visually. The framework is presented as follows:

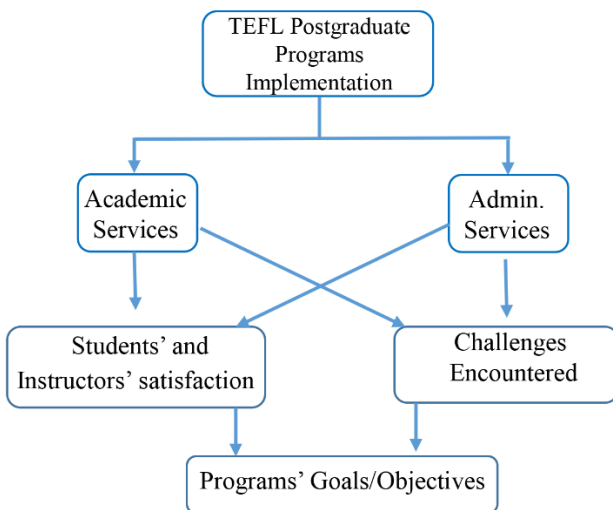


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study (Prepared by the researchers)

To sum up, the current study emerged from the researchers' own observation and engagement in TEFL postgraduate programs as course instructors and supervisors of the postgraduate candidate researchers. Both the students' and instructors' satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the implementation of the programs were observed though there were no concrete empirical evidences at hand. Both the students and their instructors were complaining of difficulties or challenges in implementing the programs, as well. Thus, this study intended to answer the following two research questions:

- To what level are postgraduate students and instructors *satisfied* with the implementation of the teaching of English as a foreign language (TEFL) programs at the four selected Ethiopian public research universities? and
- What *challenges* of different degrees are encountered by postgraduate students and instructors in the implementation of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) programs at the four selected Ethiopian public research universities?

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Research Design

In conducting the study, a descriptive survey design was used. It was to study the satisfaction of TEFL postgraduate students and instructors including the challenges they encountered in implementing TEFL postgraduate programs. Regarding research approach, a mixed methods was used combining both quantitative and qualitative data so that they would substantiate and/or complement each other.

Study Sites and Data Sources

Due to the security problem in the northern part of Ethiopia during the data collection, it was very difficult to include Mekele University and the University of Gonder in the study. After listing the remaining six public research universities, the researchers drew lottery to identify the university that was to be used for conducting the pilot study. Accordingly, Addis Ababa University was identified for the purpose. The experience that was found from the pilot study contributed a lot in shaping and improving items of the instruments to be used for the main study in general. Thus, the study sites of the main study were sampled from the five remaining universities and those sampled universities were Bahir Dar University, Haromaya University, Hawassa and Jimma University. Regarding data sources, primary data sources were used in conducting the study.

Study Variables

The main focus of this study was to find out the *satisfaction* level of students and instructors of TEFL postgraduate programs and find out *challenges* of different degrees they encountered in implementing the programs. So the first variable studied was the level of 'satisfaction' of the addressed participants. The second variable studied was the 'challenges' the stated participants encountered in the execution of the programs.

Population, Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

Addressed members of the population of the study were the main customers of the eight Ethiopian public research universities that are offering TEFL postgraduate programs at second and third-degree levels. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the category of research universities considering that these universities are the most senior ones having more experience in running postgraduate programs.

Of the eight universities, Mekele University and the University of Gonder were excluded from the study due to the then-existing security problem in the northern part of Ethiopia. From the remaining six universities Addis Ababa University was sampled via lottery sampling technique for piloting the study. Then, again from the remaining five universities, four universities were sampled for the main study using the lottery method. The participants who provided the required data for the study were 82 Postgraduate TEFL candidates and 46 instructors.

These 128 subjects were taken using availability sampling technique. The reason to use this technique was that some candidates and instructors were in fieldwork for research and other related purposes and thus, the situation forced the researchers to use availability sampling.

Data Collection Instruments

The data collection instruments that were used in this study are questionnaires: one for the candidates and the other for instructors. They had two sections and two kinds of items. One section incorporated close-ended items meant to elicit quantitative data. The second section incorporated open-ended items intending to elicit qualitative data. The questionnaires were prepared by the researchers based on literature and the research questions of the study. Then they were piloted before using them for the main study.

Data Collection Procedures

First of all, related literature and previous research in the area were reviewed in order to obtain relevant and essential methodological insights and to design appropriate instruments and/or items. After developing the instruments and the items, the researchers employed quality assurance strategies to check the validity and reliability of the instruments. Before conducting the main study, a pilot study was conducted at one of the universities in the category to test the instruments, the items of the instruments and each research activity and the whole process. First, data were gathered using questionnaires from TEFL candidates and instructors. Next, the quantitative data were checked, tallied and computed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) version 25. The qualitative data were sorted into categories thematically and analyzed qualitatively using descriptive language.

Data Analysis

The close-ended items of the questionnaires were designed to elicit data from the participants requesting them to show their preferences of one scale from the given five-point Likert scales. In order to measure the level of the participants' satisfaction and challenges, the formula developed by Boone & Boone (2012), Valentino (2019) and Benhime (2020) was adapted and used to calculate the subjects' ranges of responses. This formula of interpreting the five-point Likert scale follows:

$$\text{Range} = \frac{\text{highestlikertscale} - \text{lowestlikertscale}}{\text{numberofscale}} = R = \frac{5-1}{5} = R = \frac{4}{5} = R = 0.8 = \text{you will add this to the smallest range, so } 1.00 + 0.8 = 1.08 = \text{the first range will be } 1.00 - 1.08.$$

To collect data about the study variables, a five-point Likert scales ranging from very low to very high for level of satisfaction and from least serious to most serious for challenges were used. The cutoff ranges for interpreting the five points Likert scale of satisfaction ranged from Very Low to Very High level and that of level of challenges ranging from Least Serious to Most Serious degree. Based on these, the close-ended items of the questionnaires were interpreted. Thus, the following table shows the ranges of the cutoffs used for interpretation of results.

The data collected from respondents were sorted for further actions and the sorting was made based on the categories of quantitative and qualitative data formats. The quantitative data were tallied, coded and prepared to compute using the SPSS version 25 packages. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviations were used to present and analyze the data collected via the close-ended items.

The qualitative data collected using open-ended items of the questionnaires were thematically analyzed and presented. Before the researchers' thematic narration and description of the data, similar data were sorted into the themes that were derived from the research questions. Finally, the findings of these qualitative data were integrated and interpreted in the discussion part together with the findings from the quantitative data in order to keep the consistency of the results.

Table 1: Ranges Used to Interpret Results Obtained via the Five-point Likert Scales

Ranges	Interpretation of Levels Based on the Ranges Given	
	Satisfaction	Challenges
1.00 – 1.80	Very Low	Least Serious
1.81 – 2.60	Low	Less Serious
2.61 – 3.40	Medium	Serious
3.41 – 4.20	High	More Serious
4.21 – 5.00	Very High	Most Serious

(Adapted from Boone & Boone (2012), Valentino (2019) and Benhime (2020))

Quality Assurance

In order to control erroneous results, the validity and reliability of the instruments and items were checked using two mechanisms namely experts' comments and the pilot study. Six experts who have ample experience in conducting research were selected purposefully in order to check the validity of items of the instruments. The instruments were given to these experts who provided comments on each item and the questionnaires themselves. Most of the comments were very constructive, and the researchers accepted the comments. Based on the comments given by these experts, the researchers corrected, amended and improved the face, content and concurrent validity of the instruments.

Additionally, a pilot study was conducted on TEFL candidates and instructors from Addis Ababa University to ensure the reliability of the close-ended items of the questionnaires. The internal consistency of the close-ended items of the students' questionnaire was checked using the value of Cronbach's alpha because 25 TEFL candidates; 14 MA and 11 PhD candidates responded by filling in each item properly. The Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire items about the study variables: Satisfaction with administrative service = 0.697; Satisfaction with academic staff = 0.852; and Challenges the students encountered = 0.877. However, it was found difficult to check the reliability of the questionnaire items that were filled in by TEFL instructors because only seven instructors returned the questionnaire. Since there were very few respondents, the researchers simply checked the consistency of their responses.

It is well-known that high Cronbach's alpha values indicate that response values for each participant across a set of questions are consistent. Except for the study variable stated as satisfaction with administrative services whose value is 0.697, all values of the alpha are acceptable. Based on the findings of the pilot study, the researchers improved some items that showed irregular results in order to get higher agreement between items when data was collected for the main study.

Ethical Considerations

First, a formal letter was taken from the concerned body for conducting this study. To ensure the informants' privacy and confidentiality, personal details were not disclosed. It was clearly communicated to the respondents that the collected data were to be used only for research purposes. In addition, informants' willingness or consent was requested in advance both during the pilot and main studies.

RESULTS

As the study followed a mixed method, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected for the achievement of the two specific objectives already stated earlier. Thus for the purpose of convenience, the two types of data are presented and analysed independently as follows.

Quantitative Data

The quantitative data collected from TEFL Students and Instructors were presented and analyzed using both descriptive statistics. For the purpose of presenting, analyzing and interpreting data, the four universities (Haromaya, Hawassa, Addis Ababa, and Jimma universities) were given codes according to their alphabetical arrangements (that is, U1, U2, U3, and U4; 'U' referring to university). In general, the data obtained are presented in tables followed by quantitative analyses.

Respondents' Level of Satisfaction

Various services are delivered by both the academic and administrative wings in running postgraduate TEFL programs in Ethiopian public research universities. The level of satisfaction obtained by TEFL postgraduate candidates and instructors from the delivered academic and administrative services and the challenges these main stakeholders encountered in the implementation of the programs required due attention and study.

Since the subjects of the study are two groups (that is, students and instructors) and the services provided are from two main wings (that is, academic and administrative), the data presentation and analysis are done accordingly. The study variables against which the data collection was made are also two. Thus, the data presentation and analysis were made addressing each part separately one following the other under the next sections.

A/ Candidates' and Instructors' Satisfaction with Academic Services

Eighty-two TEFL postgraduate program students were asked to fill out the questionnaire designed for data elicitation by rating the level of their satisfaction with the services delivered by the academic wings in their respective research universities. Accordingly, Table 2 portrays the data collected from the students.

First, the sampled candidates were asked to rate the level of satisfaction they obtained from instructional services provided by instructors. The mean value ($M = 4.26$) with the standard deviation ($Sd. = .826$) portrays that the majority of the sample candidates are very highly satisfied with the instructional services provided in their respective universities. As displayed in the table the participants have witnessed that of all the academic services provided, instructional activities performed by the instructors are found to be the most satisfying endeavors. In other words, it means that there is a very high degree of candidates' satisfaction with this specific academic instructor's activity or service.

In most of the addressed academic services in the candidates' questionnaire (items 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, and 10), the mean values and the standard deviations computed and shown in the table indicate that the sampled TEFL students are highly satisfied. The services are six out of the total ten academic services addressed in the questionnaire. Namely, they are: the support given by the course instructors, the guidance provided by research supervisors, availing digital library services, provision of training in using available technologies, transparency in grade processing, facilitation of the use of technology (like the e-learning system), acting on timely registration, TEFL postgraduate programs coordination, and TEFL postgraduate program implementation follow up.

The overall or the grand mean score of all the responses of the candidates is also found to be 3.66 indicating that the candidates' level of satisfaction with the services provided by the academic wing is high. However, the candidates are found to be satisfied at medium level with the services addressed in three of the ten academic services presented in the questionnaire. These three academic services are availing digital library services (item 4), providing training services in using available technologies (item 5) and grade processing transparently (item 6). In these three academic services, the candidates' level of satisfaction was found to be less compared to the case in other academic services listed in the

questionnaire. So, actions of improvement in these three academic services, in particular, are required to increase the candidates' level of satisfaction to a high and very high degree.

Table 2: Students' Satisfaction with the Academic Services

No	Academic Services/Activities	Mean	Sd. D.	Satisfaction Level
1	Instructional services provided by instructors	4.26	.829	Very High
2	The support given by course instructors	4.02	.955	High
3	The guidance provided by research supervisors	3.79	1.051	High
4	Availing of digital library services	3.27	1.176	Medium
5	Providing training in using available technologies.	3.13	1.489	Medium
6	Grade processing transparently	3.30	1.062	Medium
7	Facilitating the use of technology (like the e-learning system)	4.12	1.023	High
8	Doing timely registration	3.60	1.098	High
9	TEFL postgraduate programs coordination	3.54	1.078	High
10	Following up on TEFL postgraduate program implementation	3.44	1.268	High
<i>Grand Mean</i>		3.66		High

Range of level of Satisfaction:

1 – 1.8 = Very Low; 1.9 – 2.6 =Low; 2.7 – 3.4 = Medium; 3.5 – 4.2 =High;

4.3 – 5.0 = Very High)

Forty-six TEFL instructors were also asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the services delivered by the academic wing at their respective universities. The following Table 3 displays the computed data which were collected from the instructors who showed the level of satisfaction with the services provided by the academic wing.

As Table 3 shows in seven out of ten items (70%) of academic services or activities, the respondent instructors are found to be highly satisfied with the academic services provided. The overall or grand mean score of all the responses obtained from the respondents which is 3.89 also indicates that the respondents are highly satisfied with the addressed academic services in the questionnaire.

However, regarding item 7 in which the academic service stated as 'Following up/monitoring the implementation of TEFL postgraduate programs' is addressed, the respondents are found to be satisfied at medium level. In this particular academic service, the instructors' level of satisfaction was found to be less compared to the case in the rest of the academic services listed in the questionnaire. Therefore, the mentioned academic service providers are expected to do more seriously so that meaningful and more effective follow-up measures would take place to highly or very highly satisfy their customers or service users.

Table 3: Instructors' Satisfaction with Academic Services

No	Academic Activities/Services	Mean	Sd. D.	Satisfaction Level
1	Setting proper Academic Calendars	3.96	.942	High
2	Announcing Academic Calendars timely	3.98	.715	High
3	Facilitating online grade reporting	4.04	1.115	High
4	Assigning supervisors to guide student researchers	4.17	.851	High
5	Assigning instructors for course offering	4.02	.856	High
6	Assignment of Instructors as thesis examiners	4.11	.823	High
7	Following up or monitoring program implementation	3.30	.915	Medium
8	Making academic rules, regulations, and guidelines accessible	3.54	1.026	High
Grand Mean		3.89		High

Range of level of Satisfaction: 1 – 1.8 = Very Low; 1.9 – 2.6 =Low; 2.7 – 3.4 = Medium;

3.5 – 4.2 =High; 4.3 – 5.0 = Very High)

B/ Candidates' and Instructors' Satisfaction with Administrative Services

Sample respondents of the study were asked to fill questionnaire by indicating the level of their satisfaction with the services delivered by the administrative wings of their respective research universities. The data collected from both TEFL candidates and instructors are presented separately one following the other. Accordingly, the following Table 4 shows the data collected from TEFL candidates about their satisfaction with services provided by the administrative wings of the sampled Ethiopian public research universities.

As the mean scores show in Table 4 candidates were found to be highly satisfied with two administrative services: the provision of accessible Wi-Fi internet service (item 4) and the timely provision of Identity Cards (IDs) for candidates (item 8). On the other hand, the candidates were found to be satisfied at medium level with five administrative services: availing smart classrooms (item 1), availing ICT resource centers (item 2), putting adequate ICT resource centers in place (item 3), availing reliable power supply for technology use (item 5) and Putting accessible and reliable cabled internet service in place (item 6). The grand mean of all the responses also shows candidates' medium level of satisfaction. Furthermore, the candidates' level of satisfaction is found to be low with regard to the administrative service addressed in item seven, namely in the particular administrative service stated as 'availing working or study rooms for candidates'.As shown in Table 6, both students and instructors have reported that 'availing working rooms' by the administrative wing is a serious level challenge they have encountered.

Table 4: Candidates' Satisfaction with Administrative Services

No	Administrative Services/Activities	Mean	Sd. D	Satisfaction Level
1	Availing smart classrooms	3.30	1.294	Moderate
2	Availing ICT resource centers	3.16	1.261	Medium
3	Putting adequate ICT resource centers in place	3.09	1.269	Medium
4	Providing accessible Wi-Fi internet service	3.63	1.012	High
5	Availing reliable power supply for technology use.	3.15	1.289	Medium
6	Putting accessible and reliable cabled internet service in place	3.21	1.214	Medium
7	Availing working/study rooms for candidates	2.59	1.360	Low
8	Timely provision of Identity Cards (IDs) for candidates	4.10	1.096	High
Grand Mean		3.28	.438	Medium

Range of level of Satisfaction:

1 – 1.8 = Very Low; 1.9 – 2.6 = Low; 2.7 – 3.4 = Medium; 3.5 – 4.2 = High; 4.3 – 5.0 = Very High)

To sum up, it is only in two services - the 'provision of accessible Wi-Fi internet service' and 'timely provision of Identity Cards (IDs) for candidates' that the candidates were highly satisfied. Even worse, the candidates were found to be moderately satisfied in most (five out of eight – 62.5%) of the administrative services addressed in the questionnaire. This implies that the administrative wing needs to do more and more to significantly improve the services and enhance candidates' level of satisfaction to high and/or very high levels. Still the worst, the candidates' level of satisfaction was found to be low in the case of 'availing working rooms for candidates' (that is in item seven). Most of all, this service needs much attention and meaningful effort from the administration wing because the candidates should have conducive working environment for their success.

Quantitative data related to postgraduate TEFL instructors' level of satisfaction with the services delivered by the administrative wings of their respective research universities were collected using questionnaire close-ended items. The following Table 5 portrays the data collected from the subject instructors who filled out the questionnaire.

As the mean scores portray in Table 5 instructors were found to be highly satisfied with two administrative services: availing office desktop computers as English language instruction enabling tools (item 2) and providing accessible and reliable internet service (item 5). On the other hand, the instructors were found to be satisfied at medium level with four administrative services: availing smart classrooms (item 1), availing laptops as English language instruction enablers (item 3), provision of reliable power supply (item 4) and managing and/or coordinating TEFL postgraduate programs effectively (item 6). The grand mean score of all the responses of the instructors also shows the instructors' satisfaction of medium level.

Table 5: Instructors' Satisfaction with Administrative Services

No	Administrative Services/Activities	Mean	Sd. D	Satisfaction Level
1	Availing smart classrooms	3.33	1.212	Medium
2	Availing office desktop computers as English language instruction enabling tools	3.70	1.190	High
3	Availing laptops as English language instruction enablers	3.22	1.191	Medium
4	Provision of reliable power supply	2.93	1.218	Medium
5	Putting Accessible and reliable internet service in place	3.46	.982	High
6	Managing and/or coordinating TEFL postgraduate programs effectively	3.24	1.158	Medium
Grand Mean		3.26	.276	Medium

Range of level of Satisfaction:

1 – 1.8 = Very Low; 1.9 – 2.6 = Low; 2.7 – 3.4 = Medium; 3.5 – 4.2 = High; 4.3 – 5.0 = Very High)

In general, it is only in two administrative services - 'availing office desktop computers as English language instruction enabling tools' and 'putting accessible and reliable internet service in place' that the instructors were highly satisfied. Even worse, the instructors were found to be satisfied at medium level with most or four out of six (66.7%) items in the administrative services addressed in the questionnaire. This implies that the administrative wing needs to take effective measures with more responsibility to significantly improve the addressed services and enhance instructors' level of satisfaction to a high and/or very high level.

Challenges Respondents Encountered

To identify the challenges the respondents encountered, the respondents were asked to fill out the questionnaire prepared for quantitative data elicitation by rating the encountered challenges from the least to the most serious level using the following five-point Likert Scale: 1= Least Serious; 2= Less Serious; 3= Serious; 4= More serious; 5= Most Serious. Then the intended data were collected. Thus, Table 6 below displays the computed data obtained from both sample TEFL candidates and instructors (merged here for simplicity) about the challenges they encountered including the seriousness level of the challenges.

Table 6: Challenges Respondents Encountered

No	Challenges	TEFL Candidates		Seriousness Level of challenge	TEFL Instructors		Seriousness Level of challenge
		Mean	Sd. D.		Mean	Sd. D.	
1	Lack of clear administrative guidelines for coordinating the programs	2.13	1.086	Less Serious	2.78	1.052	Serious
2	Problem of coordinating the programs at the college and department level	2.20	1.127	Less Serious	2.96	1.228	Serious
3	Lack of qualified teaching staff in the field.	1.70	1.052	Least Serious	1.78	.941	Least Serious
4	Lack of adequate educational materials such as course outlines in hard and/or soft copies	1.84	1.116	Less Serious	2.17	1.180	Less Serious
5	Lack of adequate educational materials such as electronic devices (IT equipment)	2.52	1.296	Less Serious	2.52	.937	Less Serious
6	Lack of adequate educational materials such as e-books and e-journals.	2.59	1.324	Less Serious	2.46	1.089	Less Serious
7	Inadequate smart classrooms	2.38	1.324	Less Serious	2.70	1.098	Serious
8	Inadequate studyrooms/workrooms	2.66	1.416	Serious	2.80	1.147	Serious
9	Inadequate internet service areas	2.57	1.277	Less Serious	2.46	1.390	Less Serious
10	Poor coordination in preparing defense sessions	2.67	1.315	Serious	2.91	1.279	Serious
11	Poor coordination in preparing symposiums and/or seminars	2.35	1.251	Less Serious	2.39	1.105	Less Serious
12	communicating policies, guidelines & procedures of the programs to the stakeholders	2.61	1.208	Serious	2.59	1.087	Less Serious
13	Vague ways of assigning supervisors to students	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.13	.900	Less Serious

14	Thesis supervisors' lack of commitment	2.61	1.284	Serious	N/A	N/A	N/A
15	Supervisors' problem with timely feedback provision	2.79	1.264	Serious	N/A	N/A	N/A
16	Lack of clear guidelines, rules & regulations for assessing or evaluating postgraduate students' proposals	2.77	1.317	Serious	2.48	1.130	Less Serious
17	Lack of clear guidelines, rules & regulations for assessing or evaluating postgraduate students' theses	2.85	1.453	Serious	2.61	1.220	Serious

N/A: Not applicable

Key for Ranges of Mean Scores Indicating the Seriousness Level of Challenges Encountered

Least Serious: 1.00 – 1.80; Less Serious: 1.81 – 2.60; Serious: 2.61 – 3.40;

More Serious: 3.41 – 4.20; Most Serious: 4.21 – 5.00

Table 6 shows that from all the 17 items addressed in the questionnaires, inadequate studyrooms/work rooms (item 8), poor coordination in preparing defense sessions (item 10), and lack of clear guidelines, rules & regulations for assessing or evaluating postgraduate students' theses (item 17) were found to be serious challenges according to the responses of both groups of respondents. So the universities that own TEFL postgraduate programs need to pay due attention and further work for improvements in these serious challenging areas for survival of the fittest. If not, future candidates may prefer to join other universities where the challenges are less and less. The same is true for the instructors. They may shift to other higher learning institutions if there would be no meaningful actions taken in these serious challenge areas.

With regard to the four challenges addressed in items 12, 14, 15, and 16, the level of the challenges according to candidates' mean scores were found to be serious, again. Namely, the challenges are: communicating policies, guidelines & procedures of the programs to the stakeholders, thesis supervisors' lack of commitment, supervisors' problem with timely feedback provision, and lack of clear guidelines, rules & regulations for assessing or evaluating postgraduate students' proposals. Like the finding related to the two items stated in the preceding paragraph, this finding of the four addressed challenges level of seriousness has a strong message to the programs owning universities of the respondents. By any means, the customers or stakeholders of the programs need the serious challenges to be avoided.

In three more items, the result of the study shows that instructors have encountered the following challenges: lack of clear administrative guidelines for coordinating the programs (item 1), the problem of coordinating the programs at college and department levels (item 2), and inadequate smart classrooms (item 7) at a serious level. Therefore, these three areas of challenge also require due attention from the institutions to run their postgraduate TEFL programs successfully.

In general, the majority of the challenges addressed in the questionnaires (that is, items 1, 2, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, and 17) which means 58.8% of the challenges addressed were found to be at serious level challenges on which the universities under consideration and others, as well, should work much to reduce and/or overcome the challenges. The institutions studied would benefit from strongly working even on the remaining less serious challenges to be smart enough in the local and global competition in the language education industry in general, and in producing competent professionals in the field of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) in particular.

Qualitative Data

The data collected through the open-ended items in the questionnaires were thematically coded and narrated. Thus, the results derived from both the candidates and their instructor's responses are presented as follows separately under the two study variables: level of *satisfaction* and *challenges* of different degrees encountered.

Respondents' Level of Satisfaction

Both postgraduate students and instructors were asked to list down if there were additional academic and administrative services, other than those listed in the questionnaires, with which they were satisfied or dissatisfied. The majority of the respondents (60 out of 82 TEFL candidates and 36 out of 46 instructors) replied that there were no additional services that were not mentioned in the close-ended items in the questionnaires. However, fewer respondents (22 candidates and 10 instructors) listed the following academic-related services to be improved or to better satisfy them and the table below shows the list:

Table 7: Respondents' List of Additional Academic-Related Services Resulting in Less Satisfaction/weak side

Summary of Academic-Related Services Listed by Candidates	Summary of Academic Related Services Listed by Instructors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Instructors' less support in indicating possible research problems (by 20 or 33.3% of respondents) ➤ Academic staff members' less support in showing ways of composing each sub-section of proposals and main studies (by 10 or 16.6% of respondents) ➤ Instructors' less attendance and participation in seminars and defense sessions (by 15 or 25% of respondents) ➤ Instructors' less cooperation in providing reference materials in different research areas (by 5 or 8.3% of respondents) ➤ Problem of inadequate Provision of resources and teaching/learning materials in courses like qualitative and quantitative research and scientific writing (by 10 or 16.6% of respondents) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Students' less respect for their instructors and the regulations of campus (by three or 30% of respondents) ➤ Poor coordination of academic activities (by four or 40% of respondents) ➤ Candidates are less engaged in attending and contributing their best in the teaching and learning process (by three or 30% of respondents)

These academic-related services listed by the candidates and their instructors sound well and seem very relevant in implementing the two specified programs (Postgraduate for a second degree – MA and postgraduate for third-degree – PhD). In other words, if a higher learning institution wants success in the implementation of the programs, the services or activities listed need improvement or action for betterment. That is, working to improve areas of the listed activities would result in success in the particular programs.

The respondents were also asked to further indicate their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the services provided by the administrative wing though not addressed in the list of the close-ended items in the questionnaires. Thus, some of the respondent TEFL candidates and instructors listed their satisfaction in the following *administrative service* areas:

- Provision of Wi-Fi internet services in various open areas on the campus
- Facilitating training related to the use of e-learning platforms (at three universities: U1, U2, and U4)
- Facilitating postgraduate Seminars every Friday (at U1)
- Provision of internet services both Wi-Fi and cabled ones (at U2)
- Material (paper, printer and binding) supports from offices (at U3)

The provision of Wi-Fi service at various campus areas seems a very good and benchmarking service as so many students are practically benefiting from the service. Facilitating planned and updated training related to the use of technology is also a promising endeavor for both the higher learning institutions and the users, as well. As U1 is doing, facilitating the fixed schedule for postgraduate seminars also seems very relevant for postgraduate students in particular for it could be very accommodative for those who seek the opportunities. Furthermore, as U2 is doing, the provision of internet service through both cabling and availing Wi-Fi services provides better opportunities for the users and it is hoped that one university could learn from others by benchmarking.

Challenges Respondents Encountered

In order to substantiate the findings reached from the close-ended item of the questionnaires, both sample students and instructors were asked to list down the challenges they encountered in the implementation of TEFL postgraduate programs if there were any more challenges other than those listed in the questionnaires. Thus, though more respondents (52 candidates out of 82 and 26 instructors out of 46) returned the questionnaires without filing with their responses, other participants (30

candidates out of 82 and 20 instructors out of 46) provided their responses as required. Thus, the following are list of additional challenges sample *students* stated.

- The problem of announcing the days of symposiums, oral presentations and training on various issues (by 3 or 10% of respondents)
- Problem of Communicating with principal and co-advisors (by 5 or 16.6 % of respondents)
- Shortage of training in statistical analysis (by 3 or 10 % of respondents)
- Insufficient time for defense sessions at the proposal level (by 2 or 6.6% of respondents)
- Lack of clear feedback on the review of related literature part of research (by 2 or 6.6% of respondents)
- Some thesis examiners do not give chances to react to the questions they ask (by 4 or 13.3% of respondents)
- Inadequate time given to “Research” course/s (by 3 or 10 % of respondents)
- Inadequate amount of the funds allotted for conducting research and the delayed payment (by 8 or 26.6% of respondents)

As shown in the above list of additional challenges, compared to the others more respondents (26.6%) indicated that one serious challenge they encountered in the implementation of TEFL postgraduate programs is that the budget allocated for conducting the the required research is not enough. This problem sounds sensible because the current cost of materials and services has increased and thus, updating the budget allocation seems topical. Paying the allocated budget on time also needs attention and improvement.

Likewise, the responses from *instructors* are presented as follows:

- No due payment at all for the defense sessions in examining proposals at MA and PhD levels and Pilot study report examining at the PhD program level (by 8 or 40% of respondents)
- Payment delay after examining theses (by 4 or 20% of respondents)
- Less reaction from candidate examinees to the feedback they are given from research examiners (by 2 or 10% of respondents)
- Poor follow-up from the department of English Language and Literature regarding TEFL postgraduate students’ delay in submitting their research titles, proposals, and upgrading reports (by 2 or 10% of respondents)
- Lack of planned or fixed schedules for postgraduate candidates’ seminars and/or symposiums (by 2 or 10% of respondents)
- Shortage of appropriate working rooms for postgraduate candidates’ advisor ship (by 2 or 10% of respondents)

As shown in the above presented data, compared to the others the additional challenge reported by more respondents is the first one in the bulleted list. The first challenge or problem encountered is the fact that there is no due payment at all for the defense sessions in examining proposals at MA and PhD levels and Pilot study report examination at PhD program level (listed by 8 or 40% of respondents). This seems a very serious problem as examining postgraduate candidates at these levels is time-consuming, calling for intensive and careful evaluation though it is yet free service. Moreover, the cost of living in the market is rising from time to time. Thus, it tends to be offensive or discouraging to render such professional service unless the problems are solved.

DISCUSSION

In the current study, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from the addressed participants and were presented under the preceding part of the study. The studied variables were the participants’ level of satisfaction and the more serious challenges they encountered in the implementation of postgraduate programs in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL).

With regard to the discussion of the results, in relation to participants’ level of satisfaction the majority of TEFL candidates and instructors showed a high level of satisfaction with the services they obtained

from the academic wing. In other words, the mean scores of responses from the two groups of participants showed high satisfaction with the provided academic services.

The study conducted by Wong and Chapman (2023) in Singapore showed similar result in two specific academic activities. In the study, a total of 275 students of one of the largest higher education institutions participated. The respondents were requested to show their level of satisfaction with eight listed service items and the result showed that the respondents were most satisfied with two of the academic aspects stated as 'program' and 'teaching of the lecturers' the mean scores of which were the highest among all the eight student satisfaction aspects presented.

Likewise, Uka's study (2014) resulted in findings based on students' stated opinions and experiences targeting their level of satisfaction with services provided by the institution studied in Albania. The respondents reported a high level of satisfaction with activities like admissions services, registration procedures, etc. in their university. However, the distinction between the current study and Uka's study is that the current study has addressed two groups of participants (postgraduate students and their instructors) which is likely to mean that the current study is relatively more inclusive. Even more factors/variables in the area could be studied by other researchers in the future.

Nonetheless, both TEFL candidates and instructors showed a moderate level of satisfaction with the services delivered by the administrative wing in general as the grand mean scores of the responses of the two groups of participants witnessed. This means the participants' level of satisfaction in the case of administrative services is less than that of academic services. The reason could be the fact that the administrative wing deals with putting in place the essential resources that require a huge amount of budget like materials related to infrastructure development and other financial support. In general terms, shortage of resources in our context is observable due to the existing huge demand on the one hand, and the focus given to the expansion of tertiary education on the other hand. This shortage of educational resources is witnessed by the study conducted by Zelalem (2023) the conclusion of which states that Ethiopian higher education has made massive expansion launching new universities and campuses in different areas whereby the expansion has been sustained with very limited educational resources.

Regarding identifying the level of seriousness of the challenges encountered by participants of the current study, they (in some cases participants of both groups while in other cases participants of one group) have reported that in the majority of the listed challenges in the questionnaires (i.e., in ten items out of the seventeen), the challenges were found to be at a serious level. To present which group of participants reported which serious challenges, the *candidates* identified *four* out of the ten (40%) serious challenges and these challenges, specifically, are communicating policies, guidelines & procedures of the programs to the stakeholders, thesis supervisors' lack of commitment, supervisors' problem of timely feedback provision and lack of clear guidelines, rules & regulations for assessing or evaluating postgraduate students' proposals.

Instructors reported that *three* of the ten challenges (30%) are at serious level and the challenges, namely, are lack of clear administrative guidelines for coordinating the programs, problem of coordinating the programs at the college and department level, and inadequate smart classrooms. Likewise, *three* out of the ten (30%) challenges were reported by both groups of participants that the challenges are serious. These challenges are inadequate reading/working rooms, poor coordination in preparing defense sessions and lack of clear guidelines, rules & regulations for assessing or evaluating postgraduate students' theses.

Zelalem's study (2023) also reports almost similar findings stating that the persisting challenges of the majority of the Ethiopian higher learning institutions are insufficient supplies of academic resources such as Information Communication Technology [ICT] infrastructure, library facilities, laboratory and workshop equipment, lack of adequate classrooms etc. Thus, the role of the management at different levels in the studied universities in taking well-planned and practical actions to improve the challenges found out seems very mandatory and topical. Otherwise, expanding higher learning institutions and

more postgraduate programs at the expense of adequate educational resources does not seem promising and encouraging.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The study aimed at investigating the level of TEFL postgraduate candidates' and their instructors' level of satisfaction and serious challenges they encountered in the implementation of TEFL postgraduate programs at four randomly sampled Ethiopian public research universities. A descriptive survey design was used for conducting the study. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using close-ended and open-ended items incorporated in the candidates' and instructors' questionnaires.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics for the quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data analysis. Then major findings related to the participants' level of satisfaction and the challenges they encountered were identified. Some of those key findings, for instance, are: (a) Students were found to be very highly satisfied with the instructional service provided by instructors. (b) Students were found to be satisfied at medium level with the services addressed in three of the ten academic services presented in the questionnaire, that is, availing digital library services, providing training services in using available technologies and grade processing transparently. (c) Instructors are found to be satisfied at medium level with an academic service stated as 'monitoring the implementation of TEFL postgraduate programs' and thus, the program owners need to improve this issue.

With regard to the services provided by the Administrative wing: (d) Students were found to be satisfied at medium level with five administrative services out of the eight listed in the questionnaire: availing smart classrooms, availing ICT resource centers, putting adequate ICT resource centers in place, availing reliable power supply for technology use and putting accessible and reliable cabled internet service in place. (e) worst of all, the candidates' level of satisfaction was found to be low with regard to the administrative service stated as 'availing work or study rooms for candidates'. This is all about creating a good working environment or condition and so, it needs solution as much as possible from the service provider sector.

The study has both significance and some limitations. It is significant that it resulted in concrete empirical evidences about the studied two variables in the given setting. It also would help the owners of the two postgraduate programs to take remedial actions in the identified areas of participants' less satisfaction and in the serious and more serious challenges encountered. Regarding limitations, the results of the study are not generalizable for wider population because it addressed only four universities. The sampled participants were small in size. In addition, the studied variables and the instruments used for data collection are not comprehensive or inclusive enough. Thus, it is hoped that considering such limitations, other researchers are invited to conduct more studies.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and the conclusion made, the researchers would like to forward the following recommendations:

- The universities studied should work on finding solution for the limitations identified in the area of infrastructure and resource centers to accomplish the TEFL postgraduate programs successfully.
- Regarding candidates' complaint on the amount of the research funds and instructors' payment requests for postgraduate proposals and PhD pilot study report evaluation, the universities need to consider the existing material and service cost and address the cases.
- The universities should have regular and explicit monitoring strategies whereby the stakeholders' needs and expectations are addressed and major challenges encountered in the implementation of the postgraduate programs will be identified for future betterment.

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