Practice, Challenges, and Opportunities of Lifelong Learning at Debre Markos College of Teacher Education

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Abstract

This study aims to create an understanding of teachers' professional development needs and promote the practice of lifelong learning at Debre Markos College of Teachers Education. The study followed a concurrent mixed method utilizing both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Proportional stratified random sampling was employed to select fifty-five teachers from 98-eight target populations across six departments. Purposive sampling was applied to select two higher diploma program coordinators, two adult education coordinators, and the college dean. Data was collected from teachers using a questionnaire having both closed-ended and open-ended items. The data was triangulated by interviews and document reviews. Quantitatively, frequency, percentage, mean response, Pearson product correlation, and multiple linear regressions were applied to analysis close-ended questions. Qualitatively, narrations, direct quotations, and summarization techniques were used to analysis open-ended questions, interviews, and document reviews. The study confirmed that the practice of lifelong activities at DMTCE is very low. Both the quantitative and qualitative data approved that there are some factors hindering teachers` lifelong learning activities. At DMTCE, various opportunities were identified for lifelong learning to increase the professional quality of teacher educators. Concerning policy documents, the findings revealed that there are several conceptual problems both at the national and institutional levels. Hence, there is a need to make effective dialogue among college administrators, program planners, and unit coordinators in the college. DMTCE in collaboration with Amhara Education Bureau should design an applicable professional upgrading system and link it with lifelong learning activities.

Keywords: Lifelong learning, Teacher Educators, Continuous Professional Development

Background of the Study

The goal of higher education is to produce highly qualified, motivated, and innovative human resources and transfer advanced and relevant competencies for socio-economic development and poverty reduction to turn Ethiopia into a middle-income country. To achieve this goal, involving all colleges of teacher education (CTEs) and university teachers in continuous professional development (CPD) is an integral part (Ministry of Education, 2010).

Lifelong learning is part of professional development which creates a learning society in the globe (European Commission, 1995). Similarly, other scholars noticed that lifelong learning has been identified as a crucial aspect of effective personal and social functioning in the modern world (Coffield, 1999; Shoeb, 2013).

As indicated in Mpoki (2014), the idea of lifelong learning is an invention among scholars and policymakers (cited in Nafukho, 2006). Freire (1973) sets radical ideas aimed at challenging mainstream education systems by introducing terms such as "de-schooling" that imply the need for reforming and de-institutionalizing formal education from the perspective of lifelong education. The major aim of such ideas was to emphasize the importance of lifelong learning, in which individuals can learn at any stage of their lives. Even before the introduction of such radical ideas, lifelong learning as a philosophy of learning and the imperative for learning from the cradle to the grave had been insisted on almost all ancient societies throughout the world for many centuries (Bangura, 2006; Nafukho, 2006; Zhang, 2008).

Though lifelong learning in a teacher education context is considered Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in its narrow sense, in its broad sense, it includes the formal, non-formal, and informal types of learning. In line with this, many researchers assert that the availability of well-trained teachers, through pre-service training, in-

service professional development, and the informal training obtained through experience are central to improve the quality of education in many countries (Swennen &van der Klink, 2009). European Commission (2013) also argues that teacher education institutions without well-trained teacher educators who update themselves cannot do their job effectively. This is because teacher educators play a pivotal role in educational provision and thus significantly affect the quality of education.

According to MOE (2010), lifelong learning is not new in CTEs, and Universities in Ethiopia as can be seen in the Higher Education Proclamation 650/2009 where it is stated in Section 22 Institutional Quality Enhancement: (2) "The internal system of quality enhancement of every institution shall provide for clear and comprehensive measures of quality covering professional development of academic staff….". MOE (2009) also stated that the Education and Training Policy (ETP, 1994) set high standards for teachers and described a new approach to their professional development. The policy indicated that emphasis should be given to upgrading and updating both pre-service and in-service teachers. It was recognized that teachers were the key to school improvement and therefore a program of in-service CPD was developed in 2005.

In the same vein, Colleges of Teacher Education in Ethiopia have a vital role to play in overall development by making changes and spreading new ideas. Thus, it is within CTEs that a "Paradigm shift" must begin (Reda, 2015). The need for a paradigm shift within teacher education was first demonstrated when a lot of teacher-related problems were identified through research findings (MOE, 2003). The major findings include: the professional competence of teachers is deficient, the content knowledge of teachers is unsatisfactory, application of teaching skills and techniques is poor, teachers do not fulfill the standards and expectations of their profession, implementation of practicum at all levels of teacher education is inefficient, assessment process does not properly identify difficulties and potentials to enhance students' learning, very little attention

and application of action research is observed in all levels of teacher education (Ashenafi, 2017).

In response to this, MOE has taken various measures. One of these measures to enhance the quality of education in higher education institutions is the lifelong learning of academic staff through the Higher Diploma Program (HDP). Successful completion of the HDP has been instituted as a requirement for all university and college teachers in public institutions. A series of trainings has been given so far and the majority of teachers have completed the program (MOE, 2018). By doing this, the policy gives due attention to teachers lifelong learning.

However, both the national and regional experience demonstrates that lifelong learning activities in some universities and CTEs are not the systematic way. For example, much CTEs work has been carried out through the school-college linkage and providing lifelong learning activities, but less evidence is available of lifelong learning activities aimed at developing lecturers/instructors in CTEs and universities (Bogal, 2016).

This study is crucial for identifying the existing challenges related to lifelong learning and for exploring opportunities at DMTCE to achieve its educational objectives. Additionally, the research aims to demonstrate how current continuous professional development activities can enhance the quality of education within the college. Given this rationale and the researcher's firsthand experience in coordinating adult education units at the college, the chosen research topic is seen as a significant area for investigation. It seeks to shed light on weaknesses, identify opportunities, and promote the practice of lifelong learning in the Amhara region, particularly at DMTCE.

Statements of the Problem

With a rapidly growing population, swift urbanization, and other changing factors, Ethiopia has a great potential for fast social, political, and economic development (MOE, 2009). This requires all students at every educational level to have greater width and depth of knowledge, skills, and attitude which in turn makes the teaching profession more complex (Skelton, 2005).

To this effect, the Ministry of Education (2009) has stressed the importance of lifelong learning in the form of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and decided to provide various short-term and long-term on-the-job training programs for teachers, irrespective of their educational qualifications. In line with this, the promotion of active learning methods, development of problem-solving skills, application of ICT, seminars on various innovative pedagogical skills, continuous assessment, action research, and collaborative studies to improve the quality of teachers in schools, colleges, and universities respectively.

Despite such measures, several sentiments and concerns still need to be improved about the quality of graduates from teacher education institutions (Reda, 2015). As a result of this, graduate teachers are poorly prepared for their classroom teaching and unable to contribute to the expectation. MOE (2018) also disclosed that teacher educators are not efficiently providing opportunities for their students to participate fully and actively in the teaching-learning process.

A tracer study conducted by Adula (2008) on the application of HDP in classroom instruction also indicated that the HDP graduates did not apply the competencies set in the HDP syllabus to the expected level. According to the findings, this is due to constraints such as large class size, shortage of HDP handbook, and absence of well-organized follow-up or support that enforced or reinforced teacher educators to use the training skills. In the same way, Addis (2008) reported that a considerable number

of teacher educators had a positive attitude towards lifelong learning, but they did not implement the basic skills acquired from the training obtained from HDP, ELIP, and others. Addis's study also indicated that teacher educators are relapsed back to the traditional modes of using the lecture method and assessment based on formal written examinations.

In the same vein, there are no sufficient research findings on the status of lifelong learning in the Amhara region in general and at DMTCE in particular. Consequently, several issues remain unknown regarding the implementation of lifelong learning activities. Therefore, the researcher was inspired to undertake this study to assess the status of lifelong learning at DMTCE. To this effect, this study tried to answer the following research questions**.**

1. What is the status of the implementation of lifelong learning at DMTCE?
2. What are the major factors hindering the implementation of lifelong learning at DMTCE?
3. What are the opportunities for better implementation of lifelong learning at DMTCE?
4. What educational policy documents shape the practice of lifelong learning at DMTCE?

Research Methodology

Research Design

In this study, a mixed-methods design was implemented using quantitative and qualitative data. As stated by Creswell (2003), a mixed methods design focuses on collecting and analyzing data by using both quantitative and qualitative approaches in a single study. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of the research problem than using a single method alone.

The researcher used a quantitative method of data analysis to describe the status of lifelong learning at DMTCE and to infer the association between variables. A qualitative method was also employed to triangulate the quantitative data. Hence, both approaches are needed for this study to complement each other.

Participants of the Study

The population of the study was instructors of Debre Markos College of Teachers Education from different departments. From a total of 98 teacher educators in the college, 55 were selected using proportional stratified random sampling. In addition, for the qualitative aspect, purposive sampling was employed to provide insight and understanding about the subject under study. Hence, the college dean, Higher Diploma Program (HDP) leader, English Language Quality Improvement Programs (ELQIP) coordinator, Practicum coordinator, and one Information Communication Technology (ICT) instructor were purposefully selected for semi-structured interview.

Data Gathering Instruments

Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a paper and pencil instrument that asks the same questions of all members of the sample group, and which respondents can answer at their own convenience (Gall et al., 2007). Hence, the researcher prepared a five-scale questionnaire which constitutes from very often to not at all to identify the level of frequency. The level of respondents' agreement and perception were measured. Items were prepared in English Language and administered to few selected teachers for a pilot test. The questionnaire contained both closed-ended and open-ended items.

Interview

For this study, semi-structured interview questions were prepared to gather first-hand information. The reason for using a semi-structured interview is due to its advantage of flexibility in which new questions were forwarded during the interview based on

the responses of the interviewee. Hence, eight interview questions were formulated for informants to elicit ideas. The interview process was conducted in a face-to-face approach. On average each interview was conducted for one hour. During the interview process, the researcher used note-taking and personal observation techniques. In the process, both the initial and the newly added interview questions were discussed with the informants in Amharic to reduce communication barriers and to get detailed information. The purpose of the interview was to get tangible evidence that may not be possible by the questionnaire.

Document Analysis

In addition to questionnaires and interviews, the researcher used existing documents as secondary sources of data to enrich the information about the issue under study. Hence, different manuals, policy frameworks, college legislation, and strategic plans were analyzed.

Validity and Reliability of the Study

Experienced teacher educators of DMCTE were consulted to get their comments on the questionnaire and interview questions. Hence, the participants' primary focus was on clarity of objectives and language, the significance of the contents, item length, and simplicity of items. Based on their comments, the instruments were improved to reduce errors. As a result, some irrelevant items were removed; too-lengthy items were shortened, and unclear items were modified.

To check the reliability of items, a pilot test was conducted before the final administration of the questionnaire. Ten teacher educators, who were out of the target population, were selected to fill out the questionnaire. Based on their response, Cronbach alpha was calculated. Hence, items 7, 8, and 11 were modified because their reliability coefficients were 0.59, 0.63 & 0.67 respectively. Whereas the remaining

items were accepted with a minimum level of 0.73 (73%) of item 9 based on the acceptable Cronbach alpha value above .70.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data obtained from close-ended questions of the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively using percentage, frequency counts, mean response, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regressions. Percentages were used to analyze the characteristics of the target population. Moreover, data were organized, statistically compiled, and entered into SPSS-20 to obtain the mean values, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regressions. The data collected from document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and open-ended questions were analyzed qualitatively and reported through narrative descriptions to complement the quantitative data. Hence, the written notes of interviews were transcribed, categorized, and compiled together into themes. However, some remarkable expressions of the interviewees were directly quoted and followed by narrations and interpretations. Similarly, data from open-ended questions and document analysis were analyzing qualitatively.

Result

The Current Status of the Implementation of Lifelong Learning at DMTCE

The data analysis of the questionnaire revealed that there is a limited status on the practice of lifelong learning at the college. The data shown in the table below shows this.

Table 1: Status of Teacher Educators` Practice in Lifelong Learning Activities

Types of Lifelong Learning Activities	Count	Level of Participation					Total	M
		Not at all	once	Sometimes	often	Very often		
ICT training	*F*	10	25	9	7	4	55	2.91
	%	18.2	45.5	16.4	12.7	7.3	100	
Doing applied research	*F*	17	15	13	5	5	55	2.49
	%	30.9	27.3	23.6	9.1	9.1	100	
Using Internet/ the library	*F*	6	5	8	4	32	55	3.93
	%	10.9	9.1	14.5	7.3	58.2	100	
HDP	*F*	2	45	3	1	4	55	2.27
	%	3.6	81.8	5.5	1.8	7.3	100	
ELIP	*F*	18	17	15	3	2	55	2.20
	%	32.7	30.9	27.3	5.5	3.6	100	
	%	25.5	12.7	12.7	20	29.1	100	
	%	30.9	27.3	21.8	3.6	16.5	100	

According to Table 1- the internet/ library is identified as the type of lifelong learning activities teacher educators at college often use (58.2%, *M=3.93)* In contrast, the data shows that the least level of lifelong learning activities are ICT training (45.5 MR=2.91) and HDP (81.8%, MR =2.27) which teachers implement once a year. However, teachers tend not to implement applied research (30.9%, M=2.49), ELIP (32.7%, M =2.20), and reflective practices (30.9%, M=2.47) at all. Hence, the overall result of Table 1 implied that teacher educators` participation in the majority of lifelong learning activities is below what is expected.

The data also confirmed that teacher educators are involved in various lifelong learning activities. Moreover, the results suggest that teacher educators mostly participated in self-led lifelong learning activities (i.e. using the internet, reading different written materials, and research. This implies that there lack strong

collaborative organizational culture to practice lifelong learning, although most of them (85%) believed that their involvement would be more useful.

In line with the quantitative data, results from the interview with one of the interviewees suggested that:

> *Teacher educators need theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge, and general knowledge which is essential for them to master them more soundly, deeply, and widely (Respondent one). We teachers perceive lifelong learning activities as boring and time-wasting. They are wasting our time. Because we didn't get the opportunity to promote ourselves. (Respondent Two).*

In addition to this, the practicum coordinator forwarded his idea about the types of skills and knowledge areas:

> *In relation to practicum, trainings have been given for primary school teachers and directors. But I think it is important to give such trainings for teacher educators on the implementation of the new curriculum of teacher education, and in relation to practicum, on mentoring and provision of constructive feedback, about students' action research, etc.*

As the interview shows, lifelong learning coordinators indicated that the teacher educators' knowledge and attitude were not updated. They further responded that lifelong learning is poorly implemented. That means college leaders and teacher educators ignored the lifelong learning issues. They often focus on other formal teaching and learning processes. They underestimate the principle that without updating teacher educators, it is impossible to bring the desired changes on the teaching force. These all indicates that the LLL programs failed to attain the objectives sought.

Factors Hindering Teacher Educators` Lifelong Learning Activities at DMTCE

Multi-Collinearity Test

The general rule of thumb states that when a variance inflation factor (VIF) of a given predictor variable is less than five (VIF<5), the level of tolerance (T) is greater than or equal to 0.2 (T≥0.2), and its correlation coefficient(R) with other predictor variable is

less than 0.8 (R< 0.8), the predictor variable has no multi-collinearity problem (Green & Salkind, 2014). Hence, the assessment of multi-collinearity among the seven predictor variables is not a threat in this research. This is because; neither the tolerance, correlation coefficient(R) nor the variance inflation factor (VIF) indicated in Table 4.8 above shows the presence of significant of multi-collinearity.

Analysis of Multiple Linear Regression

Though different ways help to analyze the relative contribution of each predictor variable, the simultaneous method (which SPSS calls the Enter method) was employed in this research for two important reasons. First, if the researcher has no specific theoretical model in mind to fit, and second if the selected sample size of the research is relatively low in number (n=55 in the case of this research), the enter method is preferable. Hence, for this research, a set of seven predictor variables were considered to make up the model. Finally, the fitness of the model in predicting the criterion variable (teacher educators` participation in different lifelong learning activities in the college=Y) is then assessed.

Table 2: Summary of Linear Regression Results

Model (enter method)	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-values	Sig
	B	Std. Error	B		
(Constant)	3.476	.651		1.339	.000
Overloaded on routine activities(X2)	-.690	.113	.91	1.614	.012*
Lack of personal interest(X5)	.182	.218	.162	.837	.407
Lack of career development (X6)	.330	.163	.163	2.813	.020*
Inefficiency of trainers(X3)	-.139	.217	.155	2.640	.026*
Absence of rewards and per diem (X7).	-.122	.197	-.156	-3.620	.018*
Low relevance of the training (X4)	.53	.193	.063	1.275	.784
Redundancy of the training topics (X1)	-.178	.149	-.217	-1.193	.239

Note: t-values ≥ 1.339 significant at p<0.05, df =54

Regression equation $Y=3.476 +-.178X_1+.069X_2+.139X_3+.053X_4+.182X_5+.133X_6+-.122X_7$

Taking the regression equation displayed above, one can make the following statements. The first number in the regression equation is 3.476; this is the intercept or the constant. This means that when the values of all the seven selected predictor variables become zero, the value of the dependent variable (level of teacher educators` participation in different lifelong learning) will be 3.476. Similarly, the regression coefficient of X1 is -0.178(i.e. the slope of the line). This implies that holding other variables constant, a unit increase in redundancy of the training topics (X1) will decrease the value of the dependent variable (level of teacher educators` participation in different lifelong learning) by 0.178. We can make the same interpretation for the rest of the six predictor variables by taking each regression coefficient as a slope of the regression equation.

The focus of this research is to determine the individual and composite effects of the seven predictor variables. Hence, first, it is important to analyze the independent contribution of each potential predictor variable, whether they are statistically significant and, if so, what type of relationship. For doing such analysis, the regression coefficients, and the partial t-test were used with degree of freedom ($df = 54$) and level of significance ($p<0.05$).

Being overloaded on routine activities (X2, B=-0.690) is statistically significant (p=0.012), and the regression coefficient is negative which would indicate that a high level of overload on routine activities related to lower teacher educators` participation in different lifelong learning activities which is what we would expect. In the same way, the other three predictor variables (i.e., the inefficiency of trainers/resource persons, absence of rewards and per diem, and lack of career development) have a statistically significant relationship with the criterion variable (participation in different lifelong learning activities=Y) though their direction of relationship is not the same. Specifically, for the inefficiency of trainers'/resource persons (X3, B= -.139, p=.0260), for the absence of rewards and per Diem (X7, B=-.122, p=.018), and lack

of professional career development (X6, B=.330, p=.020). Here, we can see that both the inefficiency of trainers/resource persons and the absence of rewards and per diem will lower teacher educators` participation in lifelong learning activities in college which is what we would expect. However, lack of professional career development has a positive influence on teacher educators` participation in lifelong learning activities, this result was somewhat unexpected.

Table 2 also shows the standardized regression coefficients or beta weights (β) from SPSS output. The beta value is a measure of how strongly each predictor variable influences the criterion variable. The beta is measured in units of standard deviation. When we have more than one predictor variable, the beta regression coefficient is computed to allow us to make such comparisons and to assess the strength of the relationship between each predictor variable with the criterion variable.

Firstly, it was found that only overload on routine activities(X2), lack of professional career development (X6), inefficiency of trainers/resource persons(X3), and absence of rewards and per diem (X7) are significant predictors. Secondly, one finds that being overloaded on routine activities(X2) has a higher impact on teacher educators` level of participation in different lifelong learning activities than the other three variables (X2, β = .91; X6, β=.163; X3, β=.155 and X7, β=-.156).

The last column of Table 1 shows the result of the partial t-test with the level of significance (α=0.05). This helps to check whether each independent variable significantly contributes or adds to the prediction of the dependent variable. Hence, the t-values of being overloaded on routine activities(X2), lack of professional development (X6), inefficiency of trainers/resource persons(X3), and absence of rewards and per diem (X7) are significant. That means, with 95% confidence, these

four predictor variables have the potential power to predict the value of the dependent variable at (df =54, $p<0.05$).

Table 3: Model Summary Table

Model	R	R Square(R^2)	Adjusted R Square (adR^2)	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.711[a]	.505	.501	.107

The other output in multiple regression analysis is the model summary with all possible predictor variables included. To construct the model, all predictor variables are included in the first block and the "Method" remains on the default value of "Enter."

Table 3 shows the model summary table with the R, R^2, and *ad* R^2. **R** is a measure of the correlation between the observed value and the predicted value of the criterion variable. In this example, this would be the correlation between the levels of teacher educators` participation in different lifelong learning activities in the college and the levels of our seven predictor variables. R Square (**R^2**) is the square of this measure of correlation and indicates the proportion of the variance in the criterion variable which is accounted for by our model – in our example the proportion of teacher educators` participation in different lifelong learning activities in the college accounted by our set of predictor variables (X1, X2, X3…X7). In essence, this is a measure of how good a prediction of the criterion variable we can make by knowing the predictor variables. However, R square tends to somewhat overestimate the success of the model when applied to the real world, so an Adjusted R Square value is calculated when the number of observations (participants) in our model is relatively small. In such a case, the adjusted R Square value gives the most useful measure of the success of the model.

Table 3 shows the multiple linear regression model summaries. one can find from the same table that the unadjusted multiple R^2 for this data is 0.505, and the adjusted

multiple R^2 is 0.501. Here, one can see that there is no significant difference between the unadjusted R square value and the adjusted R square value. Since the adjusted R square value is greater than zero point five (*ad* R^2> 0.5), the model summary indicated in Table 2 above shows, that the model is strongly fit.

Table 3 also shows that all seven predictor variables together accounted for about 0.505 (50.5%) of the variance on the value of the dependent variable (teacher educators' participation in different lifelong learning activities).

The final column in Table 3 gives us the standard error of the estimate. This is a measure of how much R is predicted to vary from one sample to the next. In this research, the standard error of the estimate is about 0.107, which means the multiple correlation R between all the predictor variables (X1, X2, X3…X7) and teacher educators' level of participation in different lifelong learning will vary by 0.107(10.7%) if we move from the given sample(n=55) to the next sample.

Qualitative Findings on Challenges of Lifelong Learning

Respondents suggested their ideas based on their lived experiences. The interviewee replied that:

To me, the most influential factors are: *1) the Existence of a prevailing attitude in our society in general and in our college in particular that learning is only for youth in a formal way in educational institutions such as schools' colleges, and universities. 2) Besides financial limitations and lack of other facilities to new technologies, self-development is also inhibited by a lack of interest and motivation among teacher educators, a shortage of time [College dean].*

Another respondent on the same question reflected that:

> *Teacher educators' access to the digital infrastructure is limited and inconsistent. Moreover, overwork load, lack of commitment on teachers, lack*

> *of technical and professional support from MoE and REB, and skill problems in utilizing ICT devices are among the determinant factors [ICT coordinator].*

Similarly, the HDP leader forwarded his ideas concerning the possible barriers:

> *Teacher educators lack the commitment to transfer their HDP training into their classroom teaching and in the way of their professional practice, lack of supervisory support from the concerned bodies, our culture and they we grow starting from our childhood, poor time management, being overloaded by routine activities, and absence of the responsible body about HDP were among the various implementation problems while lifelong learning was practiced.*

The college ELQIP coordinator also raised important ideas that:

> *Currently, English language skills have been diminished in our college, even among us teacher educators. This is because, in the new modalities of teachers' education, the medium of instruction is Amharic in many departments. Surprisingly, the so-called English specialists have been taking all education and common courses except English courses. Besides these, there is no budget allocated for ELQIP.*

Data from open-ended questions also showed that several potential factors have been influencing the implementation of lifelong learning. Out of the total sample (55), about 38(69%) of teacher educators responded "*We do a lot of work on working days, so we have very little time to think about our professional development. Sometimes it becomes more stressful. So, if we have something that needs to be done, we have to work into the night."* Other barriers commonly mentioned by teacher educators are:

- *The absence of internet access in their office is (more repeated)*
- *Absence of reward for professional career development in the college (more repeated)*
- *Absence of stakeholders' support and motivation* (repeated)

To conclude this subsection, both the quantitative and qualitative data prove that some influential factors are hindering the involvement of teacher educators in lifelong

learning activities. The commonly identified ones include the absence of internet access in their office, absence of reward for professional career development in the college, absence of stakeholders' support, the low academic status of college students, lack of a systematic follow-up, absence of training manuals and resources, and lack of adequate budget to support LLL activities were also found to be more serious challenges to engagement in lifelong learning activities.

It is also found that high workload, low management support, engagement in routine activities, external interferences, and absence of rewarding mechanisms are some of the factors for the low level of teacher educators' commitments. A low level of commitment affects the overall implementation of the program. For example, there is variability among teacher educators in the practical application of the new approaches to teaching and learning (e.g. active learning methods).

Qualitative Results on Opportunities' for Practicing Lifelong Learning

For the lifelong learning system to work smoothly in a self-regulating way, various opportunities are accessible to every teacher educator. In line with this, the *College dean* mentioned the following opportunities during his interview.

1) *Expansion of digital infrastructures such as personal devices, management information systems, broadband internet, and Wi-Fi services.*
2) *The beginning of teaching observation and entering peer supervision among teacher educators.*

In the same way, the HDP leader suggested that the availability of various reference materials about the HDP program and other related issues sufficiently is a good opportunity.

Data from open-ended questions were also summarized as follows:

- *The existence of research, publication and dissemination center, and broadband internet.*
- *Availability of well-experienced senior lecturers in different fields*
- *Provision of short-term training on different topics*

Overall, the findings from both teacher educators' questionnaires and interviews with LLL coordinators have uncovered several opportunities for teacher educators at DMTCE. Informants of interviews gave evidence that the Ethiopian Government has placed more emphasis on teacher education. Various teachers' development programs have been identified as providing a sound foundation for the continuous professional learning of teacher educators. The recent trend of teacher education programs has given a clear message that Ethiopian teacher education is moving towards a diverse system, with more emphasis on professionalism. Policy changes, such as the *TESO program*, Continuous Professional Learning (CPD), and provision of different short-term trainings have an impact on pushing the LLL of teacher educators forward.

As mentioned above, both open-ended questions and interview results show that various opportunities are found for lifelong learning activities to increase the quality of teacher educators.

Data from open-ended questions also indicate that most of the time, the Amhara Education Bureau supervisors visit us only when there is a problem. There is no culture of dialogue and there is limited professional development support. There is also no timely feedback on some of the important issues in relation to professional development.

Discussions

This research aims to create an understanding of teachers' professional development needs and promote the practice of lifelong learning at Debre Markos College of Teachers Education. Concerning participants` responses about the factors affecting

teachers' involvement in lifelong learning, the findings of this study imply that teacher educators have encountered different problems. They need training to further develop their professional skills, knowledge, and attitudes to become efficient teacher educators. Results of semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions strengthen this. This result confirmed the findings of Celik (2011) that teacher educators of different institutions required different knowledge and competencies to exercise their expertise effectively.

Another area of finding in this research is the status of teacher educators` participation in lifelong learning at the college. Though teacher educators have various accesses, the overall result implied that the status of lifelong learning activities is very low, i.e. that is unexpected. Qualitative data obtained from open-ended questions and interviews substantiate this result. However, this is not consistent with previous studies. For example, Hargreaves (1994) found that lifelong learning is emerging as a new model of professionalism which is continuously updating teacher educators' skills, knowledge, and attitude in their working area. Moreover, (Cochran-Smith 2005) cited in the European Commission (2013) emphasized that teacher educators should be encouraged to expand their repertoire of professional skills, as an essential feature of their lifelong learning journey involving them through different professional development activities.

In terms of the support provided to teacher educators, this study found three sorts of contribution. Firstly, it indicates the categories of professional support. Secondly, it shows the support provided by the Amhara Regional Education Bureau, the college, and MoE. Thirdly, it shows the support provided by NGOs which have an important power to bring a positive impact on teacher educators positively. But the overall result of both quantitative and qualitative data in this research shows that the level of support provided for teacher educators is very low. This does not go in line with the idea of

the European Commission (2013) that all key stakeholders should share the commitment to support teacher educators' professional development.

According to Leader (2003), lifelong learning has the potential to improve the quality of education, increase access to education, and pedagogical innovation, and create high market value. It expands the learning opportunities of teacher educators which be able them to learn anytime and everywhere. Incongruent with this, the empirical evidence of both open-ended questions and interviews in this research indicates that teacher educators have ample access at their hand to empower themselves via participating actively in different lifelong learning activities in the college.

Results obtained from both descriptive and inferential statistical data confirmed that teacher educators' participation in lifelong learning has been affected by a number of interrelated factors. The results of interviews and open-ended questions also implied that teacher educators' involvement in different lifelong learning activities has been challenged by a number of interrelated factors. This seems to be in congruent with the findings of Leong (2008). Certain obvious issues such as lack of motivation, time, and adequate resources can interfere with an individual's success as an independent adult learner. In addition, more subtle problems, such as a lack of awareness about personal knowledge deficit, personal reluctance to change, ambivalence, and group mentality, can also be significant barriers to participation in certain lifelong learning.

The important findings with regard to policy framework indicated that there are inadequate national and institutional policies for addressing issues related to lifelong learning. The findings relating to the integration of LLL into the Ethiopian education system revealed that there was inadequate recognition and integration of different forms of learning other than formal education. The importance of a well-organized lifelong learning policy would allow the maximum interaction between teacher educators and strengthen the support system from different angles (Leader, 2003).

Conclusions

This study focused on the potential of lifelong learning in teacher education, particularly the extent to which lifelong learning has been practiced within DMTCE. Different international and national issues related to LLL were included to highlight its relevance to the social, political, economic, and historical developments within the country in general, and in DMTCE in particular.

The study shows that lifelong learning is implemented at a lower level in the context of teacher education. This study is unique in that it focuses on promoting the practice of LLL which is potentially useful in addressing wider educational problems such as poor quality of teacher candidates. It is also found that an intervention at national, regional, and institutional levels by governmental bodies is necessary to improve the practice of LLL.

The result shows that teacher educators have various accesses to lifelong learning in the college, On the contrary, there is a set of multiple factors hindering the implementation of lifelong learning. This pushes one to conclude that urgent interventions should be taken to alleviate their negative impact on teacher educators' involvement in LLL programs.

The findings suggested the need for some policy extensions and transformations in the existing practice of lifelong learning. Despite the reforms that have already been put into practice, there is still a clear need for further changes to be made in the teacher educators' continuous professional learning to maintain and improve the high quality of the teaching workforce.

For the traditional approaches to teaching and learning, it is timely crucial to reexamine the overall teachers' education and the context under which is offered. Since the findings in this study have indicated that despite the growing rhetoric about

LLL in different national and college-based policy documents, there appears to be only scant evidence concerning the implementation of LLL.

Recommendations

- A structure needs to be established to enable an enhanced working relationship between college administration and different lifelong learning program coordinators involved in the college.
- A more proactive approach to lifelong learning program is needed. For this to be achieved, the Ministry of Education needs to have a strong commitment to the provision of a clear policy on lifelong learning in higher education institutions and in conjunction with Regional Education Bureaus and needs to designate a separate implementation strategy in teacher education institutions.
- Teacher education colleges must realize that the professional requirements of teacher educators are now different from what they were in the past. As a result, the involvement of such institutions is essential in creating a lifelong learning culture. Specifically, there needs to be a more commitment to lifelong learning within college and this could be achieved by integrating different lifelong learning dimensions into the strategic plan of the college.
- The college should create a conducive working environment for teacher educators to enhance their motivation and commitment to achieve the envisaged goals of lifelong learning. It should also be an autonomous institution and free from external interferences as enshrined in the education and training policy and education sector development program.
- DMTCE and Regional Education Bureau should make efforts to firmly institutionalize lifelong learning activities, and appropriate management support should be provided to sustain engagement in LLL activities, third, there should be a clear and applicable career development structure for teacher educators linked with lifelong learning programs.

- There should be incentive mechanisms attached to HDP, ELQIP, Research and Community Service (RCS) and there should be systematic follow-up and regular management support, and fulfillment of appropriate facilities to realize their impact.

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