Teacher's continuous professional development Programs in Ethiopia: A critical analysis and reflection

Wondifraw Dejene[1] and Daniel Mamo[2]

[1]Assistant professor in curriculum and Instruction, Departments of education, Dire Dawa University, Dire Dawa, Ethiopia, email: wondideg@gmail.com Phone number: +251912186486.
[2]Assistant professor of educational policy and leadership, Department of Education, Dire Dawa University, Dire Dawa, Ethiopia

Abstract

Quality teachers, for quality education, are the single greatest determinant of student achievement. It is now globally recognized that professional development plays an important role in changing teachers' teaching methods and beliefs, and have a positive impact on students' learning. The purpose of this study was to reflect on the practice of the new teachers' Continuous Professional Development (CPD) framework introduced in 2009 through a critical analysis of recent studies. It elucidates how actors, in the education sector, have been occupied with the rhetoric of system reforms, and yet continues to signal contradictory messages in their discourse and practices. The article further pointed out that, eight years after the "framework for continuous professional development for primary and secondary teacher leaders, and supervisors" was declared, the same old problems have continued bottlenecking the education system. It attempts to show implications for future.

1. Introduction

Quality teachers, for quality education, are the single greatest determinant of student achievement. Teacher education, ability, and experience account for more variation in student achievement than all other factors. Studies have found that 40 to 90 percent of the difference in student test scores can be attributed to teacher quality. MOE (2005) contend that without a competent teacher, no curriculum can be implemented effectively and quality education will not be attained. Knowing the subject matter, understanding how students learn, and practicing effective teaching methods translate into greater student achievement. Therefore, it is vitally important that teachers be well prepared when they begin teaching and that they continue to improve their knowledge and skills throughout their careers.

Corresponding author: Wondifraw Dejene, email: Wondideg@gmail.com , phone: +251912186486

According to Craft (2000), teaching is forever an unfinished profession, thus, professional development is intrinsic to the vocation of teaching. By its very nature, teaching is never complete, never conquered, always being developed, always changing. Many authors offer evidence to support the fact that professional development plays an important role in changing teachers' teaching methods and beliefs, and that these changes have a positive impact on students' learning (Bolam & McMahon, 2004; Neil and Morgan, 2003; Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

Harris and Sass as cited in Workeneh and Tassew (2013) also confirmed that the availability of well-trained teachers, through pre-service teacher training, in-service professional development and the informal training obtained through on-the- job experience, is central to improving the quality of education at both primary and secondary levels in many countries. As it has been clearly explained in the education and training policy ratified in 1994, the previous education system has been suffering from problems relevance, equity, access and quality. In addition to this, the teaching competence and professional ethics of teachers were below the expected standard. Thus, the education and training policy designed in 1994 was intended to alleviate all those problems that shackle the education system. Accordingly, the case of teachers was among the critical issues which were given priority in the policy. It was mentioned that;

> *"Teachers starting from kindergarten to higher education will be required to have the necessary teaching qualification and competency in the media of instruction, through pro-service and in-service training (MOE, 1994)".*

Hence, to facilitate implementation of the policy in the area of teacher education, a task force was formed to study the problems. The duty of the task force was to investigate the quality and effectiveness of the teacher education system and forward possible solution to improve the education system of the country (Tadele, 2013; Wudu, Tefera and Woldu, 2009; and Ahmed, 2013). Their study report showed that Ethiopian teacher education had multifaceted problems and needed a major overhaul. In its response to the findings, the MOE adopted a framework of strategies and launched the Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) in 2003.

The TESO program was developed as part of the implementation strategies of the New Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia. It was intended to bring about paradigm shift in the Ethiopian teacher education system. The paradigm shift, as mentioned in the TESO

document, involves (a) teaching which makes change in ideas and directly in pupils life (b) taking the real world in to the classroom and taking teachers out into the real world (c) democratizing teacher education giving teachers, students, and citizens confidence to make decisions and take initiatives, to take control of their world.

Moreover, the Teacher Development Program (TDP), which is part of Teacher Education System Overhaul, is launched towards the end of 2003. The Teacher Development Program is based on the government's original policy framework for the reform of the teacher education system overhaul (MOE, 2003). It is also part of the government's second and third Education Sector Development Programs (ESDP II and III) as a key strategy to achieve quality primary and secondary education.

Teacher development program was designed in a phase base. The first phase (TDP I) lasts for four years (MOE, 2008). According to MOE (2008), TDP I aimed at improving the quality of teacher educators at Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs), especially through reformed practicum and selection processes, as well as improving and expanding in-service teacher professional development activities. It also supported more generally the teacher education system, training for school leaders and management, and the quality of English language teaching.

Despite the success that TDP I have demonstrated in many areas, it had the following general problems with implementation:
   ✓ The key indicators were too ambitious;
   ✓ Staffing capacity was insufficient to implement the program;
   ✓ Monitoring and evaluation was not sufficient, and did not relate sufficiently to baseline data;
   ✓ Limited effect on improved pedagogy in the classroom;
   ✓ Inadequate attention to institutional incentives (MOE, 2008)

Therefore, MOE has launched TDP II as part of a quality improvement package known as "The General Education Quality Improvement Package (GEQIP) in 2008. TDP II focuses on continued improvement of quality teaching and learning through targeted interventions which can bring about lasting systemic change. It aims to improve the quality of instruction and therefore student learning by enhancing the capacity of teachers in primary and secondary

education (MOE, 2008). TDP II represents a shift from a system implementation design to a quality improvement design. This affords, according to MOE (2008), a greater focus on increasing teacher effectiveness in the classroom. A changed structure allows a greater focus on this goal. TDP II comprises two mutually reinforcing Priority Programs; Pre-Service Teacher Education Quality Improvement, and In-service Teacher Education Quality Improvement. In order to achieve its intended objectives, TDP II embraced six sub components i.e. the practicum, module development, higher diploma program (HDP), continuous professional development (CPD), alternative basic education (ABE), and English language quality improvement package (ELQIP). This paper is aimed at reviewing progresses seen on the quality and competence of teachers and thereby their effectiveness in the classroom as a result of the implementation of TDP II with particular emphasis on teachers' continuous professional development (CPD).

2. Continuous Professional Development

According to Veronica (2009), continuous professional development is the maintenance and enhancement of the knowledge, expertise and competence of professionals throughout their careers according to a plan formulated with regard to the needs of the professional, the employer, the profession and society. CPD allows all teachers to improve their knowledge, skill and attitudes in order that they become more effective classroom practitioners and contribute meaningfully to students' learning. Craft (2000) described teachers' continuous professional development as a wide range of learning activities through which teachers maintain and develop throughout their career to ensure that they retain their capacity to practice safely, effectively and legally within their evolving scope of practice. He further explained that CPD consists of reflective activity designed to improve an individual's attributes, knowledge, understanding and skills. It supports individual needs and improves professional practice.

The objectives of teachers' continuous professional development, according to Villegas-Reimers (2003) and Kelchtermans (2004), are;

- ✓ Support teacher capacity to teach effectively using appropriate new student-centered and problem-solving approaches.

- ✓ Improve teachers' subject-matter knowledge based on the content of the curriculum and the teaching approaches which require teachers to engage students in the development of higher-order thinking skills.
- ✓ Help teachers develop more positive attitudes, more cooperative approaches to their work at the school level, and strengthen professional identity.
- ✓ Introduce the idea of reflective practice and action research through which teachers studied their practice to improve it.
- ✓ Promotes teachers to recognize their work as a professional by providing new opportunities for growth, exploration, learning and development.

3. Continuous Professional Development: The Ethiopian Context

In Ethiopia, CPD is a compulsory requirement for those who teach in all Ethiopian educational establishments. Following Pre-service and Induction professional training, it is the civic and professional duty of all educators to engage in Continuous Professional Development (MOE, 2009a). Thus, CPD program (TDP I) was begun at national level in primary and secondary schools in 2005. It is made up of 2 components; the first component is a two-year induction program for new teachers while the second one is for those who are already in the system where each teacher is expected to complete a minimum of 60 hours CPD time (MOE, 2008 and 2009a). This program consist of three course books which teacher work through in small groups or cluster of schools. Each course consisted of three units covering aspects of teaching and learning and school ethos (MOE, 2009a).

A CPD guideline was also produced outlining the new strategies and courses developed for the induction of newly deployed teachers and for CPD priority programs. The program focuses on improving the teaching-learning process, with the priorities of introducing teachers at all levels with concept and application of active learning, practicing continuous assessment, and managing large classes (Ahmed, 2013; Koye, Yesewzer, and Yonas, 2015). It enables the participants to develop skills, knowledge and understanding which will be practical, relevant and applicable to their current role or career aspiration. However, an impact study on the effectiveness of the program by Haramaya University in 2008 revealed that teachers were not using improved teaching methods as expected. According to the study, this was partly due to variations in the level of supervisor support to teachers; partly due to only centrally produced CPD manuals, written in English, being available, with little or none

regionally produced; and partly due to inappropriate didactic methods of CPD facilitation (MOE, 2008 & 2009a; Hogenbosch, 2009).

In addition, in the studies, six major challenges were identified; failure to synchronize the career structure and the CPD values and activities, CPD facilitators' high turnover, time constraints on teachers as well as their school leaders, CPD program's lagging behind its time and the tendency of rushing to cover the course, total absence or inadequacy of the minimum resources required to run CPD, and lack of systematic collaboration and coordination between Education Bureaus, TEIs and NGOs (MOE, 2009a). Taking into account the major findings and implications of the impact studies and the recommendations entailed from need analysis, MOE introduced new CPD program as part of TDP II (MOE, 2008, 2009a & 2009b). The new CPD program underlined the importance of awareness-based understanding of all stakeholders on the essence of CPD, revising the existing CPD manuals in a way that incorporate the new general and teacher education curricula; translating CPD manuals into local languages;   active involvement of teachers in planning and implementing the CPD program.

To this end, MOE has developed a new CPD framework and a practical toolkit for Continuous Professional Development for Primary and Secondary School Teachers, Leaders and Supervisors in 2009 (MOE, 2009a, 2009b). In the development of these documents, the ministry has consulted all stakeholders in the country- REB officials, zone officials, Woreda officials, supervisors, principals, teachers, and instructors from tertiary educational institutions which will increase the acceptance and recognition of the document and ease its implementations.

The contents of these two documents are based on best international practices and recommendations of national need analysis research conducted by MOE with active participation of teachers and regional education bureau officials. Among the recommendation of the national need analysis research which have served as a key in designing the new CPD framework, the following are some to mention;

❖ There should be shared and common understanding of what is meant by CPD
❖ Teachers should have ownership of their CPD. They should be involved in identifying their own needs and the needs of their school, and in planning appropriate training.

❖ CPD should continue to concentrate on teaching methodology and understanding and responding to the learning needs of all students.

❖ The language of the materials must be appropriate for the teachers. This should involve translation into local languages and the simplification of language.

❖ There should be specific Leadership and Management training for supervisors and directors, especially on the nature and purpose of CPD (MOE, 2009).

According to the new CPD framework and toolkit documents (MOE, 2009b), the CPD is a developmental program that moves in a cyclical path anchored at four stages namely: Analyze→ Plan→ Do→ Evaluate. Moreover, the responsibilities of the different stakeholders; teachers, school leaders, Cluster Resource Centers, Woreda Education offices, Zone education Departments, Regional Education Bureaus, and the Ministry of Education were clearly articulated in the framework. The Practical Toolkit explains how to apply the new CPD Framework for teachers in schools. It envisages detailed activities to be worked out by individual teachers, departments and at school levels and the expected outcomes from the CPD program.

It was designed with the purpose of implementing the framework. It provides the CPD coordinator, the principal, and the individual teacher with the tools (i.e. how to identify prioritize and select needs, how to produce annual plans, evaluate, monitor etc) in the form of activities that will enable them to plan and implement CPD. In other words, the toolkit gives details of the four phases of CPD: analyze, plan, do and evaluate. The tools that can be used in each phase, the way they use them, and even practical example that represent the Ethiopian school context were also included in each phase which will help them understand each phase and what and how to complete each phase.

According to Daniel, Dessalegn, and Girma (2013), the old CPD was monotonous, ambiguous, full of inconsistencies and something that does not address school-based problems and detached from context. The new CPD toolkit, however, has a number of worth mentioning properties compared to the old one. It aims at up-dating and upgrading teachers in terms of knowledge and adjustment in career structure. It is indicated in the new CPD toolkit that schools are expected to identify three priority problems out of which each teacher selects and implements one based on his/her interest and area of study (MOE 2009b). In other words, a plan for teacher professional development is developed and implemented by each school

with active participation of teachers in groups at department level and at individual teacher level.

Furthermore, the framework informs all stakeholders that range from the individual teacher to MOE to have their own annul CPD plan based on needs analysis. The purpose of the new CPD is "to improve the performance of teachers in the classroom in order to raise student achievement and learning. It is a career-long process to improve knowledge, skills and attitudes centered on the local context particularly classroom practice" (MOE, 2008 and 2009a).

4. Status of the new CPD program framework

Studies that examine the status of the new CPD (under TDP II) in primary and secondary schools were conducted in different parts of the country. The studies focus around implementation status (Asefa and Lemma, 2019; Abrham, 2019; Dawit, Dawit, and Anteneh, 2018; Koye et. al., 2015; Negash, 2022; Tadele 2013; Yewoinhareg, 2013; and Yitayew, 2013), impacts, and opportunities & challenges (Daniel et. al., 2013; Getachew, 2014; Lerra and Teka, 2014). From the findings of these studies, it is possible to generalize that the new CPD program is not achieving the purpose it is intends for. For instance, a study conducted by Yewoinhareg (2013) to examine the practice of CPD in secondary schools of North Showa Zone of Oromiya region revealed that the effectiveness of CPD program on practices of teaching activities (on student learning outcome) was not highly pronounced. She further disclosed that due to shortage of manpower and extra office work REB (Reginal Education Bureau, ZEO (Zonal Education Office), and WEO (Woreda Education Office) are not discharging their responsibilities. They do not even prepare local needs-based annual CPD plans which are expected of them as stated in the framework.

Similarly, after studying the practice, opportunities, and challenges of CPD in 12 (twelve) primary schools of Addis Ababa City administration, Daniel et al. (2013) concluded that the overall practices of CPD that could contribute to improved learning among students are yet to be established. In a survey of 17 primary schools consist of 300 participants (teachers, principals, CPD facilitators, Woreda and zone experts) in Metekel zone of Benishangul Gumuz Regional State, Yitayew (2013) found that Teachers' practices of professional development activities such as mentoring, portfolio development, conducting action researches, facilitating group discussions and peer observations, and evaluating the overall

successes and failures of the implementation processes were inadequately implemented. According to him, teachers' lack of interest and commitment, workload, lack of knowledge and training on the principal and CPD facilitators' side, and absence of budget and support from Woreda and Zonal offices are affecting the successful implementation of CPD program. He further explained that school principals and CPD facilitators confessed that they had no professional training different from teachers so as to provide appropriate and timely support and feedback for the teachers.

Moreover, a study conducted in secondary schools of Shaka zone of SNNP regional state by Getachew (2014) disclosed that the contribution of CPD in updating and upgrading teachers' professional competence and thereby improving students' learning was found to be unsatisfactory because of lack of teachers' willingness and commitment, untrained school principals and CPD facilitators, and poor support from the Woreda and Zone education offices. In the CPD framework, it is stressed that CPD activities should be done in group, the group is designed to be led by facilitators, usually selected from experienced members of the school staff, and each group would meet at least once every two weeks. However, Yewoinhareg (2013) reported that experienced teachers were not in a position to practice CPD activities as per the standard set by MOE.

Another study on the status of CPD in primary and secondary schools was conducted by Koye, Yesewzer, and Yonas in Harari Regional state. The study covered 16 primary and 3 secondary schools with a total population of 173 participants. According to the study, practice of CPD program is limited only to primary school and not at all at secondary schools (Koye et. al., 2015). They further identified resistance from secondary schools, unfunctionality of cluster resource centers, lack of commitment from mentors (experienced teachers), supervisors, and principals to do their own CPD and become models for teachers as impeding factors for the implementation of the new CPD program.

The irony is that the challenges which are seriously affecting the effectiveness of the new CPD program as identified by most studies are more or less similar with those of previously identified in TDP I and used as bench mark for designing the second new CPD program, as part of TDP II, launched as of 2010. The major challenges or gaps identified include resistance from secondary schools, lack of commitment of mentors to support teachers, unfunctionality of Cluster Resource Centers, lack of commitment of supervisors, mentors and

principals to do their CPD and become models for their teachers, lack of ownership of CPD to follow up regularly and assess its status (Koye et. al., 2015). Absence of follow up from MOE, REB, absence of linkage between CPD practice and teachers' career structure, lack of budget to run the program, and lack of incentive mechanism (Koye et. al. 2015; Daniel et. al., 2013; Getachew, 2014); and lack of knowledge and experience on the principal and CPD coordinators side (Daniel et. al., 2013, Getachew, 2014) are also among the problems.

In the development of the new CPD framework, an attempt was made to make it more localized with a focus on the schools and the teachers (MoE, 2009b). Schools are supposed to identify their CPD needs, develop an annual CPD plan, and design and deliver CPD modules. It is obvious that for the school to discharge these responsibilities, the principals and the CPD coordinator need to have the necessary skills and knowledge, however, the studies by Yitayew (2013) and Getachew (2014) disclosed that the school principal and the CPD coordinators were found to be unskilled and inexperienced in CPD which obstruct its implementation.

On the other hand, although the framework clearly put the duties and responsibilities of all stakeholders, the finding of the studies conducted at different parts of the country revealed that they are not discharging their responsibilities to the level expected (Yewoinhareg, 2013; Getachew, 2014; Koye et. al., 2015). It was noted that the framework was developed with the participation all stakeholders. A recent study by Abrham (2019) and Negash (2022) also revealed that the extent of teachers' engagement in continuous professional development practices was inadequate. The absence of strong link between CPD and teachers' career development structure, efficiency, licensing and relicensing has made the teachers to be skeptical of CPD.

In conclusion, the studies discussed above have demonstrated that teacher professional development programs haven't really made much of a difference and are just paying lip service to the goals they were supposedly aiming for.

5. **Implications for the future**

It is observed in some of the research findings that absence of linkage between CPD and teachers' career structure still operate as a contributing factor for lack of interest and commitment to participate in CPD activities. The implementation of CPD and its

contribution to improved classroom practice would be more effective if teachers were motivated. This depends partly on the availability of incentives and good teacher management schemes. Teacher's motivation is key factor in the success and /or failure of teaching and learning (Workeneh and Tassew, 2013). World Bank as cited in Getachew (2014) also stated that Teachers with low motivation are characterized by limited effort devoting less time to CPD activities. Similarly Workeneh and Tassew (2013) added that motivation not only helps teachers to stay in the profession, it also encourages them to continually improve their qualifications, teaching skills and knowledge.

Teachers' motivation can be influenced by differences in standards and expectations. Better qualifications may cause teachers to have higher expectations (Urwick and Mapuru as cited in Workeneh and Tassew, 2013) and therefore to be more motivated to produce high-quality teaching. Therefore, linking CPD to career structure or create motivation packages might help to amplify teachers' motivation, dedication and commitment. Moreover, a supportive school environment is important for teachers to build on their strengths, potentials and gain competence, confidence, commitment and a sense of joy on teaching (Day, 1999). At school level, the school principal and CPD facilitators are the immediate professionals to provide support and feedback which will facilitate the teachers' effort in improving the classroom practice through CPD activities.

It was also indicated in the framework that school leaders CPD facilitators are expected to ensuring the quality of engagement of teachers in CPD activities, monitoring and assessing the content of individual Professional Portfolios and giving constructive feedback. However, they need to have the required knowledge and experience that will enable them offer the necessary support teachers need. Therefore, having principals and CPD facilitators with proper training on what and how of teachers' continuous professional development will enable us to see the desired changes on the quality of education.

Moreover, the issue of budget continued still as a challenge. Therefore, authorities at the higher hierarchy (MOE and Regional States) should take the issue seriously and might look for alternative mechanisms for fundraising activities at school level. By and large, the development of sense of ownership of the program by all the stakeholders at different hierarchy of the education system and discharging one's duties and responsibilities is the key to the realization of the objectives of CPD program. In addition, organizing continuous intra and inter-

region discussion forums to share experiences and scale up best practices, could solve most of the

problems impeding successful practice of CPD program.

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