

Policy Brief

The Need for a Comprehensive Teacher Education Policy in Ethiopia: A Policy Brief

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Executive Summary

Ethiopia's teacher education system has faced significant challenges over the years, including teachers' recruitment, development, career pathways, retention, and the misalignment between teacher training programs and the realities of classroom teaching. This policy brief addresses the critical need for reform in teacher education in Ethiopia, emphasizing its integral role in enhancing the overall quality of education across the nation. Despite acknowledging the importance of quality teaching in the 2023 Education and Training Policy, it fails to provide comprehensive guidelines for the recruitment, development, and retention of teachers. As Ethiopia strives to achieve its educational goals, including those outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) for quality education, the deficiencies in teacher education represent a significant barrier to progress. The brief identifies key gaps in the 2023 Education and Training Policy, which inadequately addresses the critical aspects of teacher education provisions, and alignment with the Ethiopian Education Roadmap. To address these pressing issues, this brief outlines policy options, including the formulation of a dedicated teacher education policy that focuses on effective recruitment, training, and career pathways. Additionally, it recommends strengthening continuous professional development programs to enhance teacher skills and motivation, while ensuring alignment with the national education roadmap. Comparative analyses with successful international teacher education systems, such as those in Finland and Singapore, provide insights into effective strategies that could be adapted to the Ethiopian context. Without significant action in teacher education policy, Ethiopia will struggle to improve educational outcomes and meet its national development goals.

Keywords: Education policy, roadmap, teachers' education

1. Introduction

Teacher education in Ethiopia plays a critical role in shaping the overall quality of the national education system; yet, it remains an area that is not sufficiently emphasized in the 2023 Education and Training Policy. As Ethiopia strives toward its educational goals, including those set by the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which calls for inclusive and equitable quality education for all by 2030, the role of teachers is indispensable (United Nations, 2015). Teachers are the implementers of curriculum, facilitators of student learning, and key agents of change in educational reforms (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Ethiopia's teacher education system grapples with significant challenges, even as teachers remain the cornerstone of the nation's educational progress. Historically, there has been a lack of a dedicated and comprehensive teacher education policy (Mekonnen, 2022). The 2023 Education and Training Policy, although recognizing the importance of teachers, does not provide clear and actionable guidelines for the recruitment, development, and retention of quality teachers (Ministry of Education, 2023). This neglect has a ripple effect on the overall quality of education, as teacher preparation programs struggle to align with international best practices, and the profession continues to face low status, inadequate resources, and limited professional development opportunities (World Bank, 2021).

In light of these gaps, it is essential to develop a more focused teacher education framework that addresses the needs of both pre-service and in-service teachers. The framework should align with the broader national educational goals and international standards, ensuring that Ethiopian teachers are well-prepared to contribute to the country's educational development and address the learning needs of students across various contexts (UNESCO, 2020). This policy brief aimed to analyze the gaps in the 2023 Education and Training Policy regarding teacher education and propose actionable recommendations to address components of teacher education crucial for ensuring that the teaching workforce is equipped to meet educational demands.

2. Policy Problem

The 2023 Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia present a significant gap in addressing the needs of teacher education. The policy, which is intended to guide the country's education sector for the next decade, provides insufficient focus on the key components required for developing a

robust teacher education system. While previous policies and reforms such as the Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) and the Post-graduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT) sought to improve the quality of teacher education, these initiatives have not fully addressed the underlying challenges. Teacher education in Ethiopia continues to face issues such as limited professional development opportunities, inadequate preparation for teachers in the use of modern pedagogical methods, and poor alignment with the demands of 21st-century teaching.

Furthermore, there are substantial gaps between the 2023 policy and the recommendations outlined in the Ethiopian Education Roadmap, which emphasizes transforming teaching into a respected profession by enhancing teacher competence and motivation. The policy lacks clear strategies for addressing the recruitment, development, and retention of qualified teachers, and it does not provide sufficient incentives or career pathways to attract and retain top talent in the teaching profession. This gap contributes to the persistent challenges faced by Ethiopia's education sector, including teacher shortages, especially in rural areas, low student performance, and inadequate learning outcomes.

Addressing these deficiencies requires a comprehensive and dedicated teacher education policy that aligns with global best practices and addresses the evolving needs of both the teachers and the educational system. Without significant reform in teacher education, Ethiopia's efforts to improve the quality of its education system and meet its national development goals will be severely hindered.

3. Analysis of the Issue

This analysis is informed by insights gathered through key informant interviews with educational experts and a comprehensive review of relevant policy documents, including the 2023 Education and Training Policy, the Ethiopian Education Roadmap and education policies of different countries. The 2023 Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia present significant challenges in addressing teacher education, despite its crucial role in the country's education system. Teachers are the foundation of any educational system, and ensuring their quality and preparedness is essential for achieving national development goals. However, the revised policy fails to prioritize teacher education adequately, highlighting critical gaps in both pre-service and in-service training.

4. Key Gaps in the 2023 Education and Training Policy

The policy includes only a brief mention of teacher education in subsection 4.6, which focuses on the educational levels of teachers, trainers, and educational leaders. While the policy does propose a continuous professional development program linked to professional licensing, it lacks detailed guidelines and strategies for teacher education. This is in stark contrast to the comprehensive provisions found in the earlier 1994 education policy, which gave more weight to teacher development and recruitment.

Despite recognizing the importance of aligning teacher training with school curricula, the 2023 policy does not provide clear directions for improving the quality of teacher preparation programs or addressing the existing gaps in the recruitment, development, and retention of teachers. Interviews with educational experts reveal a consensus that teacher education is not given the prominence it deserves. One respondent noted the lack of a dedicated section on teacher education in the policy, while another emphasized the need for more in-depth analysis and guidance on the role of teacher educators.

2. Challenges in Teacher Education

Findings from document analysis reveal discrepancies between the 2023 Education and Training Policy and the earlier policy and Ethiopian Education Roadmap. Ethiopia's teacher education system has faced significant challenges over the years, including a shortage of qualified teachers, limited professional development opportunities, and a lack of alignment between teacher training programs and the realities of classroom teaching. The frequent reforms in teacher education models, such as the shift from the Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) to the Post-graduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT), have not been empirically evaluated, leading to instability in the teacher preparation system.

Moreover, the professional development of teachers remains weak. Many teachers, especially those in rural areas, lack access to adequate training resources and support systems. The absence of a comprehensive teacher education policy exacerbates these challenges, leaving the system under-equipped to provide high-quality education to students across the country.

3. Discrepancies with the Ethiopian Education Roadmap

The lack of alignment between the 2023 Education and Training Policy and the Ethiopian Education Roadmap further complicates efforts to improve teacher education. The 2020 Education Roadmap emphasized the need to transform teaching into a profession of choice, focusing on enhancing teacher competence and motivation. It proposed several system-wide reforms, including the development of clear teacher management policies, improving teacher salaries and working conditions, and ensuring continuous professional development. These recommendations are stated as follows in the roadmap document:

“Introduce motivational career structures at all levels, enhance the content and quality of professional development programs, institutionalize CPD at all levels, and align career promotion and incentive with performance and the licensing. And review teachers’ salary to make it competitive to that of other professions, Provide adequate benefits such as housing, transport, free medical treatment, adequate pension, low interest loans.”
(Ethiopian Education and Training Roadmap, 2020)

However, the 2023 policy does not reflect these recommendations. The disconnection between the roadmap and the current policy framework creates obstacles to implementing effective reforms that could enhance teacher education and, consequently, the quality of education in Ethiopia recruitment, development, career pathways, and retention. This gap was further underscored during key informant interviews, where stakeholders highlighted the absence of actionable measures for aligning teacher education provisions with roadmap recommendations.

4. International Comparisons

When compared to international best practices, Ethiopia’s teacher education system lags behind in terms of both policy and implementation. Countries such as Finland, Singapore, and South Korea have made significant strides in improving teacher education by focusing on continuous professional development, teacher incentives, and integrating new teaching technologies (Darling-Hammond, 2017; OECD, 2020). For instance, Finland's emphasis on teacher autonomy and extensive professional development has led to high student performance and teacher satisfaction (Sahlberg, 2011). Similarly, Singapore's model includes rigorous teacher training and substantial financial incentives that attract highly qualified individuals to the teaching profession (Tan, 2019). These countries offer competitive salaries, robust career pathways, and strong professional support systems that contribute to their successful educational outcomes.

Ethiopia, in contrast, struggles with attracting and retaining teachers, and professional development opportunities are limited (World Bank, 2021). The frequent reforms in Ethiopia’s teacher education system, often implemented without sufficient empirical support, have contributed to the deterioration of teaching quality rather than improving it (Mekonnen, 2022). This instability is exacerbated by inadequate resources and support, leading to low teacher morale and high turnover rates.

The 2023 Education and Training Policy’s failure to adequately address the needs of teacher education represents a significant obstacle to improving the overall quality of Ethiopia’s education system. Without a comprehensive and dedicated policy for teacher education, the country will continue to face challenges in recruiting, developing, and retaining qualified teachers, thereby hindering its progress toward achieving educational excellence and sustainable development (UNESCO, 2020).

5. Policy Options

Table 1: Policy options and characteristics

Policy Options	Key Actions	Pros.	Cons.
Develop a Comprehensive Teacher Education Policy	Formulate a dedicated policy that focuses on teacher recruitment, development, career pathways, and retention.	Provides a focused approach to teacher development and improves the quality of teaching.	Requires time and resources to develop and implement.
Produce a Directive on Teacher Education Provisions	Create a directive that clearly outlines teacher education provisions, focusing on enhancing teacher competence, recruitment standards, training processes, and support systems for teachers throughout their careers.	Establishes clear guidelines and accountability measures, improving the overall quality of teacher education and professional practice.	May lack a comprehensive policy base, which could limit long-term sustainability and integration into broader education policy frameworks.
Align the Current Education and Training Policy	Ensure that the provisions for teacher education are in alignment with the recommendations of the	Promotes coherence between the national education and the entire education	Requires significant revisions to existing policies which may be

with the Ethiopian Education Roadmap	national education roadmap, with an emphasis on enhancing teacher competence and motivation.	system, leading to more effective implementation and improved outcomes.	time-consuming and resource-intensive.
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6. Conclusion

Teacher education policy is not only necessary but urgent if Ethiopia is to meet its educational goals and advance toward sustainable development. The 2023 Education and Training Policy falls short in addressing the essential components of teacher preparation, professional development, and retention, which are crucial for ensuring that the teaching workforce is equipped to meet 21st-century educational demands.

To address these shortcomings, a dedicated teacher education policy is needed—one that provides clear frameworks for recruiting, developing, and retaining competent teachers, and aligns with Ethiopia's broader educational goals as outlined in the 2020 Education Roadmap. Strengthening continuous professional development (CPD) programs, offering competitive incentives, and revising the curriculum to better reflect the needs of both teachers and students are keys to elevating the profession and ensuring better learning outcomes across the country. By implementing these recommendations, the government can ensure that teachers are better equipped to provide high-quality education, which is essential for the nation's long-term development.

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