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Editor's Note

Welcome to Kotebe Journal of Education volume II issue I. As we glide into the edition of the journal, I would like to convey my feelings to you who are involved in this task throughout the process. I congratulate all the members of the editorial board, authors, reviewers and fellow education specialists. As a team with the mission of disseminating the wisdom of education, where idea leads as a matter of fact, the journal's journey is to reach every corner and spot of the world. Hence, it is our objective to provide scholars in the field of education a world class platform to put forward their scientific work and research and reach out their research work throughout the globe. With this commitment and determination, the journal will serve its cause and goal to promote and spread scientific research information in the field of education available to all.

This issue of the Journal has incorporated insightful research article on issues of Education. In an effort to present articles of broader significance, and to incorporate pressing educational issues of intellectual engagement into the Journal, works of different authors coming from different spheres of education were included. The managing editor and the associate editors of the Journal have gone through each article for their thematic relevance, quality, rigor and scope. The subject area reviewers of the articles have critically reviewed the articles from the vantage point of their own disciplinary perspectives. The review process of each manuscript was rigor since the aim was not to just publish. The review process considered the idea of creative dialogue instead of criticism of the original article. The reviewers were inclined more to the development and further analysis of the articles' ideas – as deem fit- rather than mere criticism and demeaning. As a result of the team endeavor by the reviewers, editors and authors, very interesting insights are incorporated in the different articles included in this issue. We hope that discussion of the widely-distributed phenomenon of scholarly interest will be shared not only among the educators but also anybody interested in education in general.

As the editor-in-chief of the journal, it is my wish that all fellow scholars in the field of education across the globe will benefit from the platform. We are counting on researchers' participation to ensure the scale up of the status of the journal. I thank all the scientific community who participated as authors, reviewers, editors and the prospective readers of the issue for their support and encouragement.

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Original Article

Task Selection and Implementation: An Account of Mathematics Teachers' Values

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Abstract

Students achieve the goals of learning mathematics through carefully chosen, organized, and implemented tasks. This study examined teachers' arguments as reflections of their values regarding task selection and implementation. Specifically, it aimed to explore teachers' values in selecting mathematical tasks and how they carried out these tasks. Valsiner's Zone theory was employed as a theoretical framework to guide the research from a sociocultural perspective. To fulfil the research objectives, various qualitative data were collected and analysed through instrumental case studies, primarily consisting of value clarification interviews and observations. Narratives from the interviews and observations were analysed using the constant comparison method. The findings revealed that teachers have had distinct approaches when it comes to selecting and implementing mathematical tasks. One of the teachers in the study prioritized conceptual comprehension and emphasized the interconnectedness of mathematical concepts over procedural fluency. Conversely, another teacher focused on student engagement, participation, and practical application of mathematics, promoting active discussions, group work, and critical thinking among students. Therefore, the study underscored the significance of teachers clarifying their values to effectively teach mathematics and enhance student comprehension within the Ethiopian educational framework.

Keywords: Implementation, Mathematical tasks, Teachers' arguments, Selection, Valuing

1. Introduction

In Ethiopian secondary schools, mathematics textbook for each grade is centrally published by the Ministry of Education. Teachers are responsible for using this textbook to choose tasks, arrange order, and prepare tasks for teaching. Especially, when teachers have one common textbook to use, the selection and implementation of tasks demand their decisions and actions that reveal their values. It directs the implementation of tasks towards the realization of what teachers think is

worthwhile to enhance students' understanding of mathematics (Seah, 2013). Utilizing carefully selected mathematical tasks in a classroom empowers students to engage in various intellectual undertakings (Bozkurt et al., 2023).

Despite its good articulation in mathematics educational research, policy documents, and practice, values are viewed and defined in different depths and breadth (Bishop, 2020; Sam & Ernest, 1997). The 'definitional inconsistency' and interpretation of values construct in mathematics educational research is epidemic (Hannula, 2012). At 'the heart of the confusion', Rohan (2000) discusses two ways of using it: values as nouns and values as a verb (to value). The theoretical explanation for the use of value as a verb "implies that some higher level evaluation has taken place" (Rohan, 2000, p. 256). In this study, values are considered evaluation functions that are described by constructs akin to guiding principles, standards, and criteria for decisions and actions (Jablonka & Keeitel, 2006). When teachers express they value (to value) certain mathematical tasks and ways of implementation, they are expressing a deeper meaning associated with it (Rohan, 2000). Thus, teachers' arguments for the choice of tasks and their implementations embody their underlying values. Focusing on this aspect, teachers' valuing refers to what they regard as worthwhile for students' learning of mathematics (Seah, 2013). As such, in this study, the uses of values are on the process rather than the underlying values.

Values are fundamental qualities that we consider important influencing our decisions and motivating our actions. They are deeply rooted in our truths and commitments, guiding our long-term choices and priorities (Seah, 2019). As a mathematics teacher, when we think of our values, we consider the principles and beliefs that are fundamental to our teaching practice. Our values in education may include fostering a love for learning, promoting critical thinking skills, encouraging perseverance and problem-solving, and cultivating a supportive and inclusive classroom environment. These values are important to us as educators because they guide our decisions, shape our interactions with students, and ultimately contribute to the academic and personal growth of our students (Schwartz, 2012).

For this study, mathematical tasks are characterized in a wider sense to include activities, exercises, group work, problems, and word problems "with clearly formulated assumptions and questions, known to be solvable in predictable time by students" (Sierpinska, 2004, p. 10). By emphasizing how teachers choose tasks, justify their choices, and implement them in a classroom, a spiral of teaching cycle model is designed to understand the selection and implementation of functions. The

model involves planning; teaching and observing; reflecting and analysing; and then re-planning the next lesson based on the teacher's self-reflection (Berg, 2009; Jaworski, 2007). In this study, beyond an attempt to analyse teachers' arguments for the selection and implementation of mathematical tasks, the analysis includes the teachers' directed efforts and the learning environment.

The focus of this study was on analysing the teachers' arguments for selecting and implementing mathematical tasks as an expression of their value system. Specifically, it dealt with how teachers select tasks, justify their choices, and implement tasks in the classroom. In this regard, the valuations of tasks that are related to what they promote and allow in the classroom are emphasized. In general, the study aimed to explore teachers' selection and implementation of mathematical tasks to understand values expressed by teachers' arguments.

Accordingly, the following research questions were designed: *how do teachers justify their values in selecting and implementing mathematical tasks?* And, *how do teachers set up and implement their chosen tasks?* In the first research question, teachers' justification for the selection, modification, and introduction of new mathematical tasks and the implementation of these tasks from available resources infer teachers' values. The argument refers to the teachers' justification, the process of reasoning, or the situation they use to explain why or why not they choose mathematical tasks from the textbook. In the second research question, the concept of 'setup' refers to the organization and arrangement of tasks. In a broader sense, it includes the methods by which teachers introduce the task, or "the teachers' communication with students regarding what they are expected to do, how they are expected to do it, and with what resources" (Stein et al., 2000, p. 25). The implementation of tasks refers to the process where the teacher and the students start to work on mathematical tasks (Stein et al., 2000).

2. Theoretical framework

Drawing on Vygotsky's notion of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and Lewin's Zone of free movement (ZFM), Valsiner developed his Zone theory. Valine's Zone Theory provides a framework for understanding teachers' values within a sociocultural context by emphasizing the social setting, goals, and actions of participants. It allows for the exploration of how teachers' values influence their decision-making processes in selecting and implementing mathematical tasks. The theory highlights the dynamic interaction between teachers and students, as well as the role of the teacher in promoting certain actions and guiding students' learning. By applying the

Zone Theory, this study gains insight into how teachers' values shape their teaching practices and ultimately impact student learning outcomes within the Ethiopian educational framework.

VZT employs additional aspects of social relations to ZPD: that are "the social setting and the goals and action of the participants" (Valsiner, 1997). As he is interested in the whole set of possibilities that may or may not be actualized, his advancement of ZPD focuses on micro-genetic studies that give attention to the immediate processes of emerging new phenomena (Galligan, 2008). In classroom learning, the usefulness of ZPD is dependent on other enabling conditions of the learning environment such as the nature of mathematical tasks and the setting (social and physical). Valsiner introduced two additional Zones - the zone of free movement (ZFM) and the zone of promoted action (ZPA).

The ZFM is the "socially constructed cognitive structure of child-environment relationships" (Valsiner, 1997, p. 189). It describes the possibility of different actions at any given time in a particular environment. Freedom of actions and thoughts within this zone is non-restricted; however, activity outside the bounded area is not permitted. Thus, it structures the environment of the students in terms of access to the area, availability of different objects, and the way the student acts. It plays a significant role in structuring the current and future actions of the child in a given environment. It characterizes "the set of what is available (in terms of areas of environment, objects in those areas, and ways of acting on these objects) to the child's acting in the particular environmental setting at a given time" (Valsiner, 1997, p. 317). ZPA is "the set of activities, objects, or areas in the environment, in which the person's actions are promoted" (Valsiner, 1997, p. 192). It "illustrates the direct efforts of the people around the child to guide his or her actions in one, rather than another, direction" (Valsiner, 1997, p. 317). The actions could be promoted through discussion, in the tools made available to students, and by example. It refers to the efforts of a teacher, the curriculum, or others to promote actions. However, as ZPA is not binding, students may comply with or reject what is promoted by their teachers or curriculum. The teacher by encouraging may guide the students to go beyond the existing boundaries of the ZFM. ZPA can also restructure the ZFM.

In the context of the present study, ZPA is a set of tasks offered by the teacher that are oriented toward the promotion of new skills. Since ZPA describes what teachers promote in the classroom, any teachers' actions aimed towards the students' learning of mathematical concepts, such as teachers' approaches to problem-solving, guiding students' work, giving examples, and others are

all part of the ZPA. Though the teacher is not the sole determinant, in the actual classroom teaching, it is her/his responsibility to select, rearrange, and implement tasks for classroom learning. Thus, she/he decides what is worthwhile for students' understanding of mathematics. These choices guide what action(s) to be promoted in the classroom. ZFM defines what the teacher values and allows from what is available in the classroom. ZFM and ZPA interact and work "jointly as the mechanisms by which canalization of children's development are organized" (Valsiner, 1997, p. 110). Valsiner argues that these zones work together as a ZFM/ZPA complex. The ZFM/ZPA as complex, dynamic, and interrelated is constantly reorganized by the teacher through interactions with students. As such, they are "always temporary, constantly changing structures that organize the immediate construction of the future state out of a here-and-now setting" (Valsiner, 1997, p. 319).

Valsiner's main concern is the development of children concerning guiding others and the environment. However, Goos (2009) argues that Zone theory can also be interpreted and used to analyse teachers' development (Focus on Teacher-as-Teacher, Teacher-as-Learner, and Teacher-Educator-as-Learner). My interpretation of zone theory is from the perspective of the teachers' choice of tasks and their implementation in the classroom. Therefore, the ZFM/ZPA complex as an interacting space between the teacher and the students was used to explore how teachers' valued tasks are implemented in the classroom.

3. Methods

The study was an instrumental case study design employing a qualitative approach. During the research, two teachers from a public school took part in the study. They were teaching exponential and logarithmic functions to tenth-grade students. Data were gathered using tape-recorded value clarification semi-structured interviews and video-recorded classroom observation. All data were transcribed for analysis. The main concern of the value clarification interviews (Raths et al. (1987) during the selection of tasks was to clarify the difference between value indicators and value. The interview assisted the teachers in explicating their arguments and reasons that involve valuing processes for choosing or not choosing particular tasks within the realms of task selection. The video-recorded lesson observations were related to the implementation of tasks within the realm of acting. The constant comparison method from grounded theory complemented the analysis of the study. It was used to compare: (a) Data within the interview: this comparison was made within each interview to identify, compare, and contrast among the meaningful elements concerning

teachers' valuing. (b) Comparison between data from interviews and data from classroom observations. This level helped to compare what was chosen and prized by the teachers against their actions.

After identifying the value indicators, interview data were coded and compared with existing codes and categories (Cohen et al., 2011).Three levels of coding: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding were used as tools for the analysis of the data. In the initial stages, value indicators as meaningful elements were identified from the interviews. Then, in the axial coding stage, the interview data which was mainly the teachers' argument for choosing tasks were cross-checked with other data sources such as video-recorded classroom teaching. It was coded and categorized to refine the open coding. Finally, with selective coding, the core codes were identified to form the 'storyline'(Creswell, 2013).

4. Results

The following two sections summarize the cross-analysis of the data to see similarities and contrasts. The presentation of the cross-case analysis addresses issues about teachers' values and task choice and implementation. The first section focuses on teachers' values about their task selection of tasks while the second one deals with teachers' values vis-à-vis implementation of tasks. In each section, findings of data gathered from the first teacher, Degu, and the other one, Agar will be presented respectively. The findings were informed by the teaching cycle in a way of addressing the two research questions. In this regard, teachers' values and the way they set up and implemented tasks are presented.

The rationale behind teachers' values in selecting and implementing mathematical tasks

Degu's values structure: Valuing conceptual understanding

During the first interview that dealt with his background and experience, he emphasized that mathematics should be taught for *conceptual understanding*. His explanation of teaching for *conceptual understanding* is that students learn mathematics through structure and relation that has evolved from simple understanding to more complex abstraction. For him, understanding concepts and their relation is the basis for learning mathematics. In the initial process of the analysis, three categories for his justification of task selection and implementation are identified: *conceptual understanding, connectedness of mathematical concepts,* and *uniqueness of tasks*. In this article, how valuing *conceptual understanding* is related to the ways he presented exponential and logarithm functions to his students is discussed.

One of the interview questions that clarifies teachers' values is related to the identification of the indicators based on the Raths et al. (1987) category that focuses on teacher's aspirations. The teacher was asked what he thinks is important when teaching mathematics.

51. *Interviewer: What is the most important point you want your students to grasp when learning mathematics?*

52. *Teacher: (…) When I teach, I prioritize focusing on the concept. I ensure that students understand the specific content before moving on to other exercises. Understanding the concept is key before delving into further practice.*

53. *Interviewer: Why do you think teaching concepts is important in mathematics?*

54. *Teacher: Unless they [students] are clear with the concept, they cannot do other things. Students should first grasp the concept. I believe, that after grasping the main concept, students will not be in trouble to solve the forthcoming problems. I am saying this from my own experience. If I am not clear with the concept, then it will be exceedingly difficult for me to go further.*

Degu interview I, 6.11.2012.

In the above extract, Degu responded to the clarifying interview question (52) that teaching mathematics for *conceptual understanding* is fundamental in his teaching. To further clarify the reason why he focused on concepts, he mentioned that if students learn the concept, then it will enhance their understanding and make them apply the concept they understand to other similar or related situations easily (54). He also mentioned the importance of considering one's own experience. His choice resulted from his thoughtful consideration of the consequences. Degu claimed that it is important for students to understand the basic concept of the specific content before they engage in solving mathematical problems. For him, classroom lessons should start by providing students with the basic concept of the content and then move to problems or exercises. Focusing on *conceptual understanding* is one of Degu's arguments in his task selection. For him, application or any other extensions should not be interwoven with the basic concepts. The teaching of concepts should come first. He argued that mixing them with concepts constrains students' understanding of the basics. He metaphorically described the concept as a 'key' for understanding. For instance, when he taught the graph of logarithmic functions, he argued that by teaching all the general properties of the function $Y = \log_2 x$, it is possible to help students draw and state other similar logarithmic functions.

106. *Teacher: Next week, I will teach the basic concepts first. Then, students will be able to identify the nature of the graph without drawing it. They will confidently describe the characteristics and shapes of the graph by visual inspection.*

107. Interviewer: Do you think that the lesson you planned will help them identify the nature of graphs?

108. Teacher: Of course!

109. Interviewer: Do you mean without sketching?

110. Teacher: Yes, after I address my lesson and help them to grasp the main concept.

111. Interviewer: Could you tell me how?

112. Teacher: For instance, I will choose the logarithm x to the base ten and one over ten to teach the whole concept of drawing the graphs. Once they understand these two graphs, then they can do others by themselves.

Degu interview II, 8.11.2012

Degu claimed that after he introduces students to 'the basic concept' (106, 110), students might apply and visualize the nature of different graphs of logarithmic functions. Degu's ways of presenting graphs of a function are at a conceptual level. He argued that if students understand the basic property of the function, they may state the property of graphs without sketching it. This is also observed during classroom observation. The other point he mentioned concerning *conceptual understanding* is related to the way he presented the tasks in the classroom. During the third interview, he reflected on his previous lessons.

223. Interviewer: How was your previous lesson?

224. Teacher: *As for me the main thing is that … I always get into the class to let them know the very concept. I think I try to use my utmost effort to do that. There should not be anything that the students miss. I will evaluate whether they grasped the concept or not. I give them some tasks and when we do them together, I can see where the problem is. It is on Monday that we will discuss these tasks. I will not start a new topic before that.*

Degu interview II, 8.11.2012

He assessed his effectiveness in teaching by considering the time he dedicated to mathematical concepts. Accordingly, he designed his classroom lessons in a way of showing them every detail. In the above extract (224), Degu justified his attainment of the objectives in terms of his devotion to showing/giving detailed information to his students. The nature of the mathematical environment was characterized by the way he organized the lesson, the promoted tasks, and the zone of free movements. Students' engagement was restricted to careful attention to the teacher's explanation. He mentioned that "there should not be anything that the students miss."

Agar's value structure: Valuing learners' participation

Agar's value structure was initially identified through indicators such as *valuing classroom participation, application of mathematics in real-life situations, connectedness to daily life, and lecturing.* These indicators were then compared against seven criteria from Raths et al. (1987). Agar emphasized the importance of classroom participation in her teaching influenced by her own experiences as a student in both church and formal schools. She believed that students' engagement and discussion were crucial for their learning objectives.

Agar's past experiences and educational background appeared to shape her preference for classroom participation as a key element in teaching and learning mathematics. This understanding led her to prioritize student engagement in her mathematics teaching, which was evident in my observations of her classroom where students seemed to have more opportunities for active participation compared to other classes. Like Degu, Agar also acknowledged the influence of her high school geography teacher on her teaching approach.

During the interview, Agar emphasized the importance of student participation in learning mathematics and stressed that discussions should align with the learning objectives. She believed that student involvement in the classroom should be aimed at helping them achieve their learning goals. I interpret her view on classroom participation as a purposeful action, like what Habermas (1984) describes as teleological action, where decisions are made based on a rational interpretation of the situation to achieve specific objectives. Through interviews with the teacher, it became clear that Agar engaged in discussions with students to determine how to best manage the classroom environment. Agar with her students considered various options, such as maintaining the current approach or implementing new strategies to meet the learning objectives, based on students understanding and interpretation of the learning environment.

According to Wertsch (1991), the sociocultural approach of a goal-oriented action employed a meditational means. Here, the teaching of mathematics in this school is mediated by the school curriculum, the teacher planning, and the way the tasks are designed. But it is also mediated by the rules set by the teacher and the students after their decision. These rules include explicit regulation to set classroom learning environments that allow students to participate. Valsiner (2007) argues that goal-oriented human action and the different orientations are culturally valued.

Two main criteria guided Agar's task selection process are: the first criterion focused on the extent to which tasks facilitate group discussions among students. She noted that the textbook offered a

variety of tasks that encourage group work, where students collaborate to solve problems. The second criterion she considered was the difficulty level of the tasks. Agar preferred to challenge her students with complex questions that push them to think critically and solve problems independently.

Furthermore, Agar's task selection was influenced by her emphasis on student participation in the classroom. As a result, she chose tasks that promoted active discussion among students. In contrast to Degu's approach, she ensured that all tasks provided in the textbook were utilized for classroom discussions. The following excerpt from an interview highlights the types of tasks Agar selected for her teaching:

> *I emphasize activities, group work, and challenging questions from the exercises. The students are familiar with my teaching style. I encourage them to engage in group discussions, regardless of whether they have grasped the concept yet. By allowing them to discuss with their peers first, they can better articulate their thoughts. Therefore, I always prioritize group activities and discussions. Agar interview II, 9.11.2012*

This was also confirmed by one of the students during the focus group discussion. The student mentioned:

> *The most valuable aspect of my mathematics teacher's approach is the incorporation of group work and preparatory activities at the start of each chapter. This was notably absent in my previous teachers' methods. By encouraging us to engage in discussions and exercises, she provides us with a comprehensive understanding of the material. This practice is particularly beneficial for our Matric exam. FGD, 10-09, 15.11.2012*

This student's assertion was further supported by the interview with another teacher, Degu, who took part in the research. Degu mentioned that he was hesitant to allocate time for group work and additional activities due to time limitations.

Setting up and implementation of selected tasks

The case of Degu: Draw the graphs of logarithmic functions

In the following section, selected episodes from classroom task implementation are presented. The selection of those episodes for analysis was made after observing all the videos. The assumption and the criterion for choosing these videos are based on their relatedness and potential to address the research issues.

The context of this lesson was that students had already learned how to draw the graph of an exponential function with different bases. The teacher also assumed that students could recall what they knew about the graph of an exponential function with a base e. Students were introduced to

the number e and the graph of $f(x) = e^x$ two weeks ago. Though, the focus of the lesson in the teacher's plan was on how to draw the graphs of logarithmic function $y = \log_b x, where\ b > 1$, the teacher decided to go beyond the objective of the lesson i.e., revising the graph of an exponential function with base e. The teacher restructured his planning to include a topic that was already discussed in the previous lesson. Though he planned to deal with how to draw a logarithm function, he decided to broaden the existing boundaries of the ZFM and tried to relate exponential and logarithm graphs.

The teacher believed that by expanding the subject matter for the day, he would give the students access to a broader perspective. The teacher promoted a discussion on the concept and graphs of the exponential function with base e. Here, it is evident that the teacher's promoted action was not binding. Students might not actively participate in the discussion or lose their interest. The teacher's promoted action restructured students' ZFM by helping them to recall what they had learned previously. Since the teacher also viewed mathematics as an interrelated concept, he decided to revise the previous lesson so that students could link the previous lesson with the new one.

The textbook introduced how to calculate continuous compound interest using the concept of numbers e. It began the discussion with an example of a case from the bank system:

"Annual rate $r = 100\% = 1,\ i = \frac{1}{n},$ if there are *n* periods of compounding per year, then the amount after one year is given by the formula equals $f(x) = (1 + \frac{1}{n})^n$. However, the teacher decided to teach without addressing the issue of banking. And he introduced the number e from its conceptual point of view. He argued that mathematical concepts should come first. Combining concepts with their application makes the task more difficult for the student. The teacher restructured the ZFM/ZPA based on what he thought was worthwhile for the student's learning. Though the application of the number e was promoted by the textbook, the teacher decided to narrow the students' zone of free movement.

After introducing the numbers e, the teacher continued to teach the students how to draw the graphs of logarithmic functions. Degu expanded the rules for students by reintroducing exponential functions, thus broadening their exposure to different mathematical areas beyond the initial scope. While the initial focus was on drawing logarithmic functions, Degu allowed students to explore the relationship between exponential and logarithmic graphs. Initially, he guided students in

graphing the logarithm function equal to $f(x) = \log_2 x$ using table construction, and the general properties of logarithms. However, upon noticing confusion between logarithmic and exponential graphs, Degu encouraged students to apply the concept of inverse functions to plot logarithmic graphs. He facilitated additional actions by prompting students to recall previous lessons and connect them to the current topic and reintroduced the concept of transforming quadratic function graphs to aid in graphing logarithmic functions.

Unlike other teachers, Degu empowered students to broaden their understanding and enhance the lesson by allowing them to utilize diverse methods in graphing logarithmic functions. The following diagrammatic illustration shows the multiple representations of logarithmic functions as implemented by Degu.

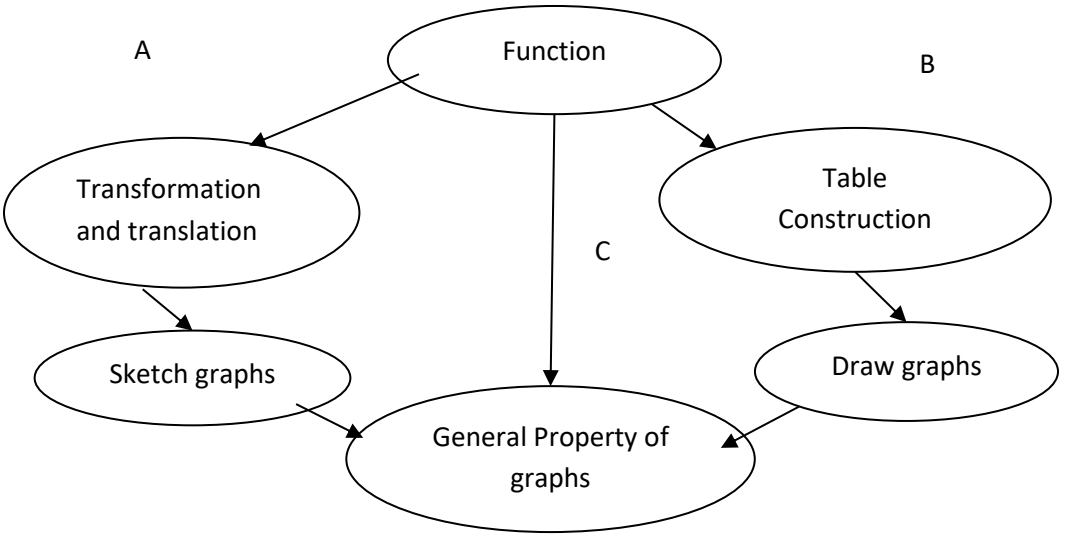

Figure 1: Degu's way of drawing exponential graphs

This task had the objective of enabling students to state the general properties of exponential and logarithmic functions. At the beginning of his lesson, Degu started the lesson by drawing the graphs of the logarithmic function $y = \log_2 x$ using table construction and asked students to state the general property of the logarithm. However, after realizing that students were confusing the graphs of logarithm with exponential function, he allowed the students to use the concept of inverse function to draw the graphs of logarithmic function. The teacher promoted additional action by restructuring students' ZFM by helping them recall what they have learned previously and relate it to the current topic. The focus of the textbook is on the properties of graphs of logarithmic

function. Nevertheless, he decided first to re-introduce the concept of transformation of graphs of quadratic function.

As it is shown in the diagram above, Degu presented the lesson in three ways.

1) He introduced a new concept not included in the textbook.

2) He asked students to construct a table and draw the graph then state the property of the graph and

3) He asked students to state the property of the graph directly from the way the function is written.

The case of Agar: Draw the graphs of logarithmic functions.

This section will explore the implementation of a specific task chosen based on its relevance to the research topics. The lesson focused on the graphing of logarithmic functions, where students were tasked with converting an exponential function to a logarithmic form and plotting its graph. The teacher observed the class to ensure students had their exercise books, were in uniform, and were seated properly. The lesson commenced with the teacher prompting students to recall information from the previous class. Following contributions from two students, the teacher summarized their input and proceeded with the day's lesson.

Part of the transcription of the lesson is presented below. Students in the following transcription are indicated as 'St' followed by a number. The number is used to indicate the interaction of the same or different student.

1. T.: What can we use to draw the graph of a logarithmic function?
2. St.: We can use a table.
3. T.: Yes, I told you that we can construct a table. Ok, what type of function is $f(x) = 2^x$?
4. St.: exponential function
5. T.: and $f(x) = \log_2 x$ this?
6. St.: Logarithmic function
7. T.: Ok, now we will together fill the table of the exponential function and you will do the logarithmic function by yourself.

The teacher filled the table by asking the students the values of the function by inserting x into the exponential function. After doing the exponential function table, then the teacher drew the following table and asked the students to do it by themselves.

X							
$f(x) = \log_2 x$	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3

The teacher toured around to check what the students were doing. Then the teacher asked if any of them wanted to do it on the chalkboard

8. St1.: $2^x = 2^{-3} = \frac{1}{8}$wrote on the board
9. T.: Is there any of you who got the same answer?
10. St2.: Yes, me
11. T.: First, raise your hand and tell us loudly how you can do it.
12. St2.: I did it like him
13. T.: How do you insert the value of the function in the variable? Look you got different values for the value of the function -3 and 1/8. Of course, the right answer is 1/8. How come this to be true at a time? Look -3, -2, and -1 are values of y but you are substituting for x. ok, any one of you?
14. St3.: y is equal to 2 the power x, and x is…
15. T.: Come and do it on the board
16. St3.:$f(x) = \log_2 x$, $y = 2^x$, $-3 = 2^x$, $x = 2^{-3}$, $x = \frac{1}{8}$
17. T.: Alright, this is an improvement, but the issue remains that you are replacing x with y. Let's examine how it should appear and what actions we can take. Please ensure to adhere to the steps provided. You saw the answer is the same as

$$f(x) = \log_2 x, \qquad -3 = 2^x, \text{then} \quad x = \frac{1}{8}$$

Then the teacher filled the rest of the table by asking the students. After completing the table, the teacher then asked the students to show the process on the table, and one of the students did it correctly. After that, the teacher checked the students to make sure that all students understood how to find the value of the function by inserting the value of x in the proper place. The teacher asked, "*Have you all understood how to do it*?". Then the students in the class responded together with a "yes".

Agar's way of dealing with the same topic was different. She started her lesson by drawing the graph of an exponential function $f(x) = 2^x$ and logarithm function $f(x) = \log_2 x$. When she observed some of the students who were wrongly inserting the values of x in $f(x)$, she was interested in making clear how to fill the tables using values of x and how to find the corresponding values of y by inserting values of x. She decided to focus on one way of drawing logarithmic functions table construction, graphing then state general properties. Thus, she asked students to use only table construction methods, and the students were not allowed to use calculators. Though, calculators were used during classroom teaching, they were forbidden during the assessments. When Agar realized that students were not capable of finding the corresponding values of x

and $y\ in$ the equation $f(x) = \log_2 x$. she stuck to the table construction method for graphing logarithmic functions.

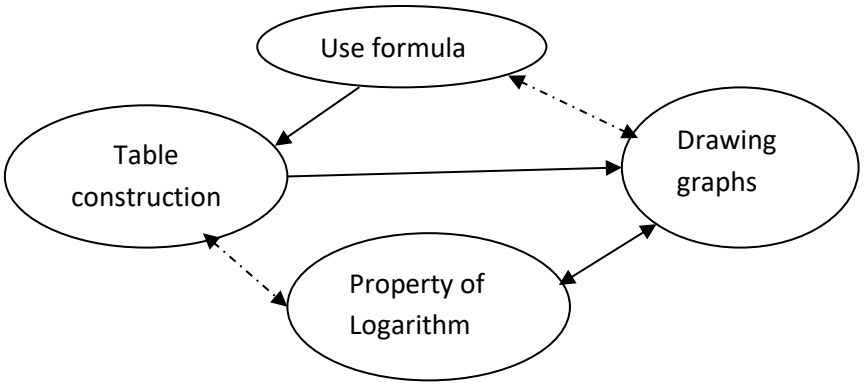

Figure 2: Agar's way of drawing exponential graphs

5. Discussion

Values clarifying interviews, video-recorded observations, and focus group discussions with students were the main instruments to identify teachers' values related to task selection and implementation. Values that were directly related to tasks were analysed in the previous sections. These are *conceptual understanding*, *interrelatedness*, *uniqueness*, and *classroom participation*. Based on the seven criteria stated in (Raths et al., 1987) which are categorized into three: choosing, prizing, and acting four out of nine values in relation to Degue's and Agar's task selection and implementation were identified. Degu emphasized teaching mathematics for conceptual understanding. Degu believed that students should grasp the basic concepts of mathematical content before moving on to problem-solving. He valued conceptual understanding as the foundation for learning mathematics arguing that it enhances students' ability to apply concepts to different situations.

Degu's teaching methods prioritized teaching concepts first before delving into applications or extensions as he believed this approach aids in students' comprehension and retention. His approach involved presenting tasks in a detailed manner and ensuring students grasp the main concepts before proceeding further. Degu's teaching philosophy highlighted the importance of conceptual understanding in mathematics education and its impact on students' learning outcomes. In contrast, Agar's value structure emphasized the importance of learners' participation in mathematics classrooms. Agar's teaching approach was shaped by her personal experiences as a student and her conviction that student engagement and dialogue are essential for successful

learning. She emphasized active student participation in classroom tasks and group conversations, to integrate these exchanges with the educational goals. Agar's method of selecting tasks was directed by standards that support collaborative work and present students with intricate queries, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. In contrast to Degu, Agar guaranteed that every task outlined in the textbook is incorporated into classroom discussions. The research delves into a comprehensive examination of a particular task selected by Agar, centering on graphing logarithmic functions and the subsequent classroom dynamics. The study underscores Agar's commitment to nurturing an interactive learning setting and the beneficial influence it wields on student involvement and academic achievements. The table below showcases the values explicitly stated by the teachers, utilizing Raths's model of value identification.

Table 1: Teacher's value indicators

Values indicators	Degu			Agar		
	Choose	Prize	Act	Choose	Prize	Act
Focusing on conceptual understanding	X	X	X			
Relatedness to other mathematical concepts	X	X	X			
Uniqueness	X	X	X			
Helping students			X			
Multiple representations			X			
Valuing classroom participation			X	X	X	X
Application of mathematics in other fields			X	X		
Connectedness to daily life				X		
Lecturing			X	X		X

The table above indicates that certain value indicators were not classified as values due to not meeting all criteria. In the interview, Degu emphasized the significance of classroom participation in the teaching and learning of mathematics. However, the observation of Degu's classroom did not demonstrate an interactive environment. He attributed this to students' lack of interest and background knowledge. Degu asserted that students must grasp the concepts before engaging in classroom interactions, hence he leaned towards lecturing. Additionally, feedback from a focus group with students revealed some discontent with the teaching approach. Conversely, Degu placed value on assisting students during his free time. Throughout my observation, I witnessed Degu supporting students who encountered challenges in their learning of mathematics.

Agar, the other teacher, emphasized the importance of applying mathematics in daily life for a better understanding of the subject. However, she noted that students may not be prepared to connect mathematics to their everyday experiences. Therefore, she did not consider relating mathematics to daily life as a core value. In my view, the classroom exchange was influenced by the local norms established during previous discussions. Both students and the teacher collaborated to create a supportive learning environment that encouraged active participation in solving well-structured tasks. The interplay of classroom dynamics, teacher objectives, and student values significantly impacted the learning and growth process. The teacher's focus on the learning journey rather than solely correct answers, and the emphasis on involving students in problem-solving activities, exemplified this approach.

Another critical factor was the task presentation and the conducive conditions provided. The task design encouraged students to focus on the process rather than solely on the result, leading to diverse interpretations and conceptualizations of the content. The task was appropriately challenging, falling within the students' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and the supportive learning environment enhanced the chances of successful learning outcomes. The ZPD, as illustrated in the analysis, functioned as a symbolic space where students' mathematical comprehension progressed under the teacher's guidance. The teacher adeptly steered the students towards grasping concepts related to exponential and logarithmic functions, in line with Vygotsky's ZPD theory emphasizing the importance of guidance in improving problem-solving abilities.

Teachers' values vis-à-vis implementation of tasks: Property of graphs of a function as a lens

In this section of the article, a discussion on how teachers set up and implement their tasks will be presented. From Valsiner's zone theory perspective, the discussion on how teachers set up and implement their tasks can be understood in terms of the dynamic interaction between the individual student and the social environment. Valsiner's theory emphasizes the importance of the socio-cultural context in shaping individuals' development and learning processes. In this case, the two identified approaches to how teachers present their lessons reflect different ways of structuring the learning environment to support students' engagement and understanding of mathematical concepts.

The first approach, where teachers establish a set of rules that guide their actions, can be seen as a way of creating a structured framework that provides students with clear expectations and

boundaries. This structured approach may help students feel more secure and confident in their learning, as they know what is expected of them and how to navigate the learning process.

On the other hand, the second approach, where teachers promote tasks that expand the zone of freedom for students, allows for more flexibility and autonomy in learning. By giving students more freedom to explore and interact with mathematical concepts in their way, teachers can create opportunities for deeper engagement and creative problem-solving.

Overall, both approaches have their merits and can be effective in supporting students' learning in mathematics. By balancing structure and freedom in the learning environment, teachers can help students develop a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts and build the skills they need to succeed in their studies.

Agar in her class, in contrast to another class observed (e.g., Degu's class), where students were limited to a single method of graphing functions, this teacher provided opportunities for students to make mistakes, learn from them, and encouraged active participation. By allowing students to freely explore and make errors, the teacher aimed to foster a supportive and encouraging learning environment. The teacher's approach of posing various questions and promoting student involvement aimed to expand students' ZPD and encourage active engagement. Despite the voluntary nature of participation in the ZPD, it was evident that students utilized their autonomy to engage in the learning process.

By applying Valsiner's Zone theory, the classroom videos were also analysed to address the second research question about how the teacher set up and implemented tasks. The approach to Valsiner's Zone theory assumes that:

- ZFM/ZPA complex is defined from the perspective of the teacher as a teacher promoting tasks for the learners within the zone of free movement.
- Teachers with what they are valuing promote tasks that are within the zone of free movement. Thus, what is promoted, theoretically, should be within what is allowed (Blanton et al., 2005).
- ZFM/ZPA continually re-structured teachers' task implementation through teacher and student interaction.

First, it is important to notice that the ZFM/ZPA complex is dynamic. Therefore, the nature of the interaction between the two zones may vary even in a single classroom. In particular, the complex is defined by how the teacher uses the classroom environment to implement tasks and teach the

content and what he allows and promotes during the lesson. From the analysis of the data, we came up with two ways of interaction between ZFM/ZPA. The ZFM is a binding agency by which Degu constrains the students' actions in terms of access to areas, objects, or ways of acting on such objects. Also, by broadening and limiting the ZFM the teacher helped students learn mathematics. For instance, Degu, when teaching how to draw the logarithmic function, expanded the ZFM for the students by re-introducing transformation in quadratic function graphs and broadened students' access to different areas which was not primarily promoted. Even though he planned to deal with how to draw a logarithm function, he decided to broaden the existing boundaries of the ZFM and tried to relate exponential and logarithm graphs. In general, the teacher's valuing of tasks and ways of presenting them structured the ZPA and the ZFM. It played a role in affording students access to act upon their learning and in narrowing free movement in each environment. The study implies how teachers may clarify their values to achieve students' understanding through effective mathematics teaching. This study has also theoretical and methodological advances in researching values studies in mathematics education.

6. Conclusion

In this article, the aim is to present teachers' arguments as reflections of their values regarding task selection and implementation. Raths value clarification and Valsiner's Zone theory have provided a tool for elucidating the role of teacher's arguments for choosing tasks. Based on the application of Valsiner's Zone theory in analysing the teachers' task selection and implementation, it can be concluded that the distinct teaching approaches of both teachers reflect their values and beliefs regarding task selection and implementation. One teacher's emphasis on conceptual understanding, student autonomy, and fostering a supportive learning environment aligns with promoting tasks within the zone of free movement. In contrast, the other teacher's structured and directive approach is indicative of tasks that are more controlled and guided, possibly falling outside the zone of free movement.

The comparison between the two teachers' teaching styles not only highlights the diversity of values-based instructional approaches but also underscores the influence of Valsiner's Zone theory on teachers' task implementation. The theory's assumption that teachers promote tasks within the zone of free movement is evident in the contrasting approaches of the two teachers in the study. The first teacher's exploratory approach, focusing on conceptual comprehension and interconnectedness of mathematical concepts, aligns with the idea of promoting freedom of actions

and thoughts within the ZFM. On the other hand, the second teacher's structured method, emphasizing student engagement, participation, and practical application of mathematics, reflects a more directed effort to guide students' actions in a specific direction within the ZFM. The application of VZT helps to understand how teachers' values influence their task selection and implementation strategies within the sociocultural context of the classroom. The study emphasizes the importance of considering teachers' values and beliefs in task selection, as they continually re-structure task implementation through teacher-student interaction within the classroom.

Disclose Conflicts of Interest

This paper is free of conflict of interest.

Authors' Contribution

All authors contribute equally.

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Original Article

Parental Involvement Status in the Education of Children with Disabilities: The Case of Tabor Primary School, Debre Tabor, Ethiopia

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Abstract

Using Epstein's theoretical framework, this study examined parental involvement status in the education of children with disabilities at Tabor Primary School in Debre Tabor Town, Ethiopia. A qualitative case study design was utilized, involving six participants. Through purposive sampling, six participants were chosen from the school for in-depth interviews. Thematic analysis was used to analyze data from interviews focusing on six dimensions of parental involvement: parenting, communication, learning at home, volunteering, decision making, and collaborative partnership. Results indicated that parents of children with disabilities are relatively more engaged in parenting activities to support children's education. However, their communication with teachers and school principals was limited. While some parents provided learning support at home, many were unable to do so. Moreover, parents had little direct participation in the decisions that were made about their children's education, even if they may have had some indirect influence through their involvement in parent-student-teacher associations. Lastly, parents were not actively involved in volunteering and collaborating activities to help children's education. Generally, the research revealed that parents of children with disabilities had limited involvement in their child's education. This limited involvement may hinder the education and development of children with disabilities. Therefore, it is essential for government bodies and others to provide training to help parents to actively play discharge their diverse roles in the education of their children.

Key words: Children with disabilities; Collaboration; Decision making; Parental involvement; Volunteering

1. Introduction

Parental involvement (PI) refers to the active participation of parents in their children's education and development. It involves parents engaging in various activities that support their children's learning, both at home and at school (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). PI encompasses a wide range of activities that parents engage in supporting their children's education (Epstein, 2009). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2003), parents who communicate regularly and meaningfully with their children's teachers about their education are considered to be fully involved. PI is increasingly recognized as crucial for the academic, social, and emotional development of children with diverse abilities (Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding and Walberg, 2005).

According to Ngwenya (2010), Kavanagh (2013) and Hornby (2011), parents' involvement in their children's education at home refers to various activities that have an impact on the success of children with different needs. These activities include assisting children with homework, providing encouragement, engaging in discussions about school activities, reading stories at home, creating conducive learning environment, and ensuring the availability of necessary learning materials and proper care. School-based involvement requires parents to physically participate in activities at school, such as volunteering, joining field trips, attending conferences and workshops, discussing their children's progress with teachers and principals, and participating in decision-making processes within the parent-student-teacher association (PSTA) (Ngwenya, 2010; Ibrahim, 2012). Therefore, parental involvement is a stronger predictor of children's academic success compared to other factors (Fan & Chen, 2001), and it is also crucial for the academic achievement of children with disabilities in inclusive settings (Xu & Filler, 2008).

Similarly, Dereli & Türk-Kurtça (2022) explained that the participation of parents is vital for children's education success and a key factor in early childhood. Parents play a crucial role in shaping their children's lives, fostering qualities like interest, creativity, and tolerance through active participation in their learning journey. Moreover, PI contributes to improved learning outcomes, enhanced self-esteem, and increased motivation and aspirations toward education (Epstein, 2001). Concerning the benefits, the government of Ethiopia stated that PI has several benefits, including improved self-esteem and academic achievement for children, stronger relationships between parents and children, and positive attitudes and a better understanding of the schooling process for parents (MoE, 2016).

Vanderpuye (2013); Afolabi (2014) and Monika (2017) stated that in a child's life, parents are among the most significant and enduring figures. With their positive involvement in the learning process and educational activities, they have the power and ability to shape, sustain, and develop their children into curious, creative, and tolerant individuals. More specifically, active PI enhances students' academic performance, social skills, and attendance at school, according to research on special needs education (Lalvani, 2015). Because they offer a variety of experiences that promote learning, parents are therefore their children's most important teachers (Fan & Chen, 2001; Washington, 2011).

More specifically, parental involvement is especially important for the education of children with disabilities because children with disabilities often have unique needs that require additional support from their parents and teachers. Parents can play a vital role in helping their children with disabilities succeed in school by advocating for their child's needs, providing support at home while doing homework and assignment, and collaborate with the school to implement a plan for their child's education. Or all of these reasons, it is essential that parents of children with disabilities be involved in their child's education. It also provides emotional support and motivation to children with disabilities, boosting their confidence and encouraging them to succeed. Thus, parental participation can ensure that children with disabilities have the support they need to succeed (Johnson & Brown, 2023).

Epstein (2001) introduced a theoretical framework that was suggested for the examination of parental involvement in their children's education, which was utilized in this research. This framework is widely used, tested, and accepted, consisting of six parental involvement responsibilities that are crucial for children with varying abilities, including those with disabilities. These responsibilities are (1) parenting- focuses providing basic needs, setting boundaries, and fostering personal development. (2) communication- maintaining regular and open dialogue with teachers and principals of schools. (3) Volunteering- assisting in classrooms, fundraising, and other school activities. (4) Home Learning- Helping with homework, setting goals, and engaging in learning activities at home. (5) Decision-Making- refers to parents' involvement in school decisions and governance activities through school improvement teams, committees, and participation in parent-student teacher association (PSTA); and (6) community Collaboration- networking with other parents and community stakeholders to access resources and help students with disabilities.

In relation with parenting, studies such as (Monadjem, 2003 and Ibrahim, 2012) revealed that parents did not actively support their children's education and did not give them access to the supplies they needed for school, such as stationery and uniforms. In addition, parents did not supervise their child's bedtime or assist in establishing a favorable learning environment at home. Moreover, a study by Mauka (2015) noted that parents were not fulfilling the basic necessities and stationaries to help children's education. Conversely, studies carried out by (Mwaikimu, 2012; Cetin & Taskin, 2016) in the public primary schools of Kenya reported that parents actively participated by ensuring their children basic parentings such as providing necessary school supplies, and creating conducive learning environment at home.

Regarding parental communication and its importance in establishing a strong connection between parents and schools, it is crucial for parents to fulfill their basic obligations. This includes actively engaging in two-way communication with teachers through various means such as conferences, dialogues, and meetings. By doing so, the gap between parents and the school community can be significantly reduced. Effective communication methods may involve the use of memos, notes, phone calls, and student report cards on a semester basis (Epstein, 2001; Patrikakou et al., 2005; Hornby, 2011; Cleophas, 2014). In addition, a study conducted by Ibrahim (2012) examined parental involvement in parenting areas of communicating for their children's educational achievements. The study indicated that parents were actively involved via parent-teacher association and by attending meetings and conferences with teachers. Similarly, Monadjem (2003) examined the communication dynamics between parents and teachers in high schools in Swaziland and it revealed that parents did not regularly meet and discuss their children's progress with teachers.

Jigyel *et al.* (2018) conducted a study on parental communication and collaboration in schools with special educational needs (SENs) programs in Bhutan. The findings revealed that majority of parents reported infrequent communication, either once every two or three months or not at all, depending on when teachers requested meetings, conferences, or discussions. Interestingly, almost all parents (n = 22/26) stated that they did not have direct communication with other staff members in the school, as they believed it was unnecessary. However, in cases where their children faced academic difficulties, parents occasionally resorted to phone communication.

Using Epstein's framework, Flemmings (2013) examined parents' experiences of volunteering for their children's education. The findings entail that parents' involvement in volunteer work is restricted because teachers view parent volunteers as a way to oversee their instructional strategies, methods of assessment, and classroom management. Parents also say they think instructors should be the only ones doing these kinds of things. Additionally, because there were no systems in place to permit parental involvement in these activities, parents were unable to volunteer in ways like helping in the classroom, going to school functions, and fundraising. Consistently, the level of parental involvement in parenting activities, as stated by Epstein (2001), was found to be poor, with only 4% of parents actively engaged (Erlendsdóttir, 2010).

Learning at home refers to the active involvement of parents in their children's educational activities at home, including assisting with homework, setting goals, and engaging in curriculum-related tasks. Research has shown that when parents participate in these activities, it leads to improved academic outcomes for students (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). However, Maluleke (2014) highlighted that some parents neglect to monitor and supervise their children's work at home, which can negatively impact their academic performance. The reasons given by parents for this lack of involvement include the belief that teachers are more capable of teaching their children and that they themselves are not qualified to assist. Additionally, many parents admitted to not helping their children with homework or monitoring their activities at home (Mwaikimu, 2012).

In terms of the decision-making process, Cetin & Taskin (2016) examined parental participation in making decisions about their children's education. The study found that parents were not regularly directly engaged in the decision-making process. However, a few parents participated through the parent-student-teacher association. Additionally, parents were excluded from the decision-making process because they were not invited to participate in governance and budget allocation. Consequently, meaningful parental involvement in decision-making was found to be beneficial and crucial for children's education.

Erdogan and Demirkasimoglu (2010) conducted a similar study to assess parental participation in decision-making. The findings revealed that parents faced structural and economic barriers that limited their opportunities to participate in the decision-making process. Nevertheless, participants

acknowledged that PTAs played a significant role as the primary decision-making bodies in addressing school-related matters and bridging the gap between schools and parents.
Ibrahim (2012) conducted a study in Nigeria using a qualitative case study approach. Parents were found to be actively involved in PSTA meetings, recognizing the importance and benefits of such gatherings. Some parents, however, faced obstacles like time constraints or work commitments.

Jigyel *et al*. (2018) explored parents' involvement in collaborative activities for the education of children with special needs in both partial and fully inclusive classrooms. The study revealed minimal collaboration between parents and schools due to economic, commitment, and time constraints. Additionally, the findings showed limited collaboration between urban stay-at-home mothers of partially included children and teachers. Overall, the study highlighted the importance of parents collaborating with the school community, particularly teachers, to ensure a successful inclusive classroom environment (Adams, Harris & Jones, 2016).

According to the Special Needs/Inclusive Education Strategy (Ministry of Education, 2012), parents have crucial roles in educating and supporting their children, especially those with disabilities. They are valuable sources of information and assistance, and can also contribute to designing and implementing educational programs. Therefore, it is essential for parents to be part of the Parent-Teacher-Student-Association (PTSA) or similar structures, and to be consulted when creating and executing individual education plans. Additionally, the School Improvement Program (SIP) in Ethiopia recognizes the importance of parents in supporting children with disabilities (CwDs) to enhance their academic performance. Teachers are encouraged to engage with parents regularly, at least twice per semester, through various means such as volunteering, conferences, communication, supporting learning at home, providing materials, participating in PTSA, and contributing to fundraising activities for the school.

Furthermore, as described in the Education Sector Development Programme, the government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) agrees that students with disabilities receive additional assistance from their parents to enhance their academic success. It also clarifies that teachers need to discuss with parents at a minimum of twice per semester through volunteering, conferencing and communicating, support their children at-home, contributing learning materials, participating in PSTA, and participating in fundraising for the school to help the education of children with SENs (MoE, 2010). In addition, In Ethiopia, the Education Development Roadmap

(EDR) emphasizes the importance of involving parents in education. It is crucial to motivate parents to actively monitor their children's academic development and general welfare. The policy highlights that parents' involvement should extend beyond financial and material assistance to primary schools and occasional visits during school breaks. Rather, parents are encouraged to share responsibilities in school activities such as teaching-learning, discipline maintenance, and fostering a conducive environment (Tirussew; Amare; Jeilu; Tassew; Aklilu, and Berhannu, 2018).

Several international studies have explored the relationship between parental involvement and the academic achievement of children with special educational needs. For example, researchers such as Afolabi (2014), Balli (2016), Monika (2017) and El Shourbagi (2017) examined parental involvement in inclusive education using Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model. However, their studies focused on the psychological factors influencing parental decision-making rather than specific parental involvement activities in education. Additionally, Bariroh investigated the impact of parental involvement on the motivation and learning outcomes of students with special needs, finding a positive correlation between parental involvement and academic success and motivation. However, this study did not assess the involvement of parents in the education children with disabilities.

A published article by Esaaba (2020) explored the extent of PI in the education of their CwDs quantitatively in Ghana. The study focused on school-based involvement activities, excluding home-based involvement activities. The study showed that the general school-based involvement of parents seems to be moderate; however, most parents were prevalently involved in parent-teacher association meetings. Although PI is seen as six dimensional, the above studies used three dimensions of PI and did not clearly articulate the dimensions by integrating multiple perspectives from different participants (e.g., teachers and parents). Hence, the current study explored the six dimensions of PI through multiple perspectives in better detail by involving parents of CwDs, and teachers in Tabor primary school.

Moreover, Ethiopian researchers Assamnew (2006); Demiesie, (2006); Tadele, (2006); Temesgen, (2006); Yohannes, Bereket and Hailu (2017) have conducted quantitative studies examining the relationship between parental involvement and student academic achievement in primary schools. Their findings consistently indicate a positive correlation between PI and academic achievement of general student population. However, a study by Sintayehu (2015) in primary schools run by the

Bahir Dar City Administration found that parental involvement at home was not significantly correlated with academic achievement, while parental involvement in school was positively correlated with student academic achievement. Additionally, they have not addressed the six dimensions of Epstein's PI framework for comprehensive parental involvement, which include parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. Therefore, further research is needed to explore the specific dimensions of parental involvement in the education of children with disabilities, in both home and school settings.

1.1.Theoretical Framework of the study

In this study, Epstein's Theoretical Framework is used to guide the research. This framework is chosen for its relevance to the topic of parental involvement in education, especially in the education of CwDs. Below are brief explanations of the nature, assumptions, and applications of the model.

1.1.1. Epstein's Theoretical Framework

This theoretical framework is developed by Joyce Epstein (1987). The basic assumption of this framework is that partnerships between families and providers (schools) are as an opportunity for shared responsibility for facilitating the growth and development of children. To that end, Epstein (2001) suggests that the relationships and interactions among family members, educators, community and students are similar to partnerships. This theoretical framework as explained by Epstein (2001) is based on the definitions of six major dimensions including parenting skills, communication, volunteering, learning at home, participation in the decision-making process, and collaboration with the community.

Parenting: includes the basic responsibilities of families such as providing housing, health care, nutrition, clothing, and safety and creating home conditions that support children's learning, for example, purchasing the necessary books and being responsive to their children and communicating with them and supporting good behavior development.

Communicating: refers to the basic responsibilities of schools, including establishing two-way communications between the family and the school; based on the assumption that schools keep parents informed about school matters by sending them newsletters or progress reports, visiting parents and employing other means to communication.

Volunteering: parents can make significant contribution to the environment and function of a school; schools can get the most of this process by creating flexible schedule, so more parents can participate, and by working to match the talents and interests of parents to the needs of students, teachers and administrators.

Learning at home: is, the type of involvement where parents can help their children in school-related activities with the guidance and support of teachers. Parents can involve in curriculum-related activities, assisting their children with homework, assignment, project works etc.

Decision making: schools can give parents meaningful roles in the school-decision making process, and help them make the most out of it; this opportunity should be open to all segments of the community, not just people who have the most time and energy to spend on school affaires.

Collaboration with the community: schools coordinate the work and resources of the community, businesses, colleges or universities, and other groups to strengthen school programs, family practices and student learning and development; schools can help families gain access to support services offered by other agencies such as healthcare, cultural events, tutoring services and after-school child-care programs.

Regarding its application to guide studies on PI in education in general and parent-school partnership in particular, extensive literature documented that this theory is by far the most used to guide studies on parent/family involvement in education. Stelmach (2009) also reported that much of the literature on parent involvement in education cites the work of Joyce Epstein since it is the most referenced, tested, and widely-accepted on PI research. As a result of this, the researchers employed this framework to guide the study.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Study Area

The study was carried out at Debre Tabor Town, which is the capital city of south Gondar Zone administration in the Amhara Region, North central Ethiopia. It is located 666 km from Addis Ababa, the country's capital, and 100 km southeast of Gondar, as well as 50 km east of Lake Tana. During the data collection period, there were six government primary schools within the city administration. These schools are: Tabor, Gafat, Dagmawi Tedros, Gebrye, Kechin Mesk, and Tsegur. These schools provide education from early childhood up to grade eight to students in the

town. The study was basically conducted in Tabor Primary School. The school was selected considering its experience in practicing inclusive education for CwDs. In this research, the term "children with disabilities" refers to children who have a visual impairment (VI) and hearing impairment (HI) who have attended their education in Tabor Primary School.

2.2. Research Approach and Design

A qualitative research approach of a multiple-case study design was employed to answer the research questions for different reasons. A case study is a research approach used to gain an in-depth understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context. It is widely employed across various disciplines, particularly in the social sciences (Miles, Huberman &Saldana, 2014). Case studies are used to explain, describe, or explore events or phenomena in their everyday contexts, aiding in understanding causal links and pathways resulting from new initiatives or developments (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2018). Since the current study focused on describing and exploring parental involvement, this design could be taken as an important one. It also allows researchers to gain in-depth insights and understanding of real-life situations and help to examine the detailed contextual situation of parental involvement. Thus, considering the nature of the study, the researchers examined the how parents of children with disabilities get involved in their children's education considering the six dimensions of PI with the reference of Tabor primary school using a case study design.

2.3. Sample and Sampling Techniques

Considering the experiences that Tabor primary school had with resource center and inclusive education practice and enrolled children with disabilities in the mainstream classes, the researchers selected the school purposively. The study involved 6 (six) participants with the recommendation of the resource center coordinator of the school. These were two teachers and four parents of children with disabilities. The researchers selected the respondents purposively because the researchers believed that the participants were assumed to provide in-depth information on the issue under study. Teacher participants were selected by considering criteria like teachers working with CwDs and having a minimum of two years of experience in teaching. The other basic criterion for determining the teacher participants was their willingness to state their own perception. Besides, parent participants were selected with the support of special needs education teachers working in the respective schools considering their prior experience of contacting and working closely with

schools. Parent 1 is female with 12 completed in her education, parent 2 is male who had BA degree, parent 3 is female who had diploma in accounting and finance and parent 4 is male who completed grade 8 complete. Finally, teacher 1 is male who had and teacher 2 is female. Therefore, a total of four parents of children with disabilities (2 males and 2 females) and two teachers were interviewed to get relevant information for the study.

2.4. Methods of Data Collection

To address the study's research question, a semi-structured interview guide was utilized. This aided in eliciting insightful and detailed reflections from participants, as qualitative interviewing is commonly used for in-depth exploration and enables researchers to delve deeper into gathered information (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013). Consequently, thorough semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out with 6 participants until reaching data saturation. Such interviews facilitated the researchers in posing additional questions to better comprehend the issue at hand (Yin, 2018).

Interview protocols, consisting of question lists and prompts, were prepared prior to interviewing participants. These protocols have been crucial in maintaining interview consistency across all individuals. They have also aided in addressing study-relevant issues systematically. The authors sought clarifications, additional details, and probing follow-up questions when needed. The interview questions were developed following an in-depth literature review in the field.

Following pre-arranged schedules concerning participants' availability, interviews were conducted to ensure credibility. Each interview session lasted approximately 30-40 minutes on a one-to-one basis, conducted in Amharic for clarity and later translated into English. Field notes and a phone device were used to record interviews, which were then transcribed. Subsequently, researchers reviewed and analyzed the texts and transcripts, allowing participants to verify the accuracy and authenticity of their reports.

2.5. Dependably and Credibility

To ensure the dependability of the interviews, interview items were organized to have the same structure, sequence of words and questions for each respondent. Also, the probes were the same for all interviewees to elicit further information. Furthermore, all the transcripts were crosschecked to ensure that there was no apparent mistakes. Lastly, the data were crosschecked by professional in the area. Furthermore, to establish the credibility, the interview items were given to experts in the

field (professionals in special needs and inclusive education) for their review, since face or content or wording of the survey was determined by expert judgment. In doing so, two experts in the area of Special Needs and Inclusive Education and Educational Psychology were involved. Additionally, a summary of responses was read to the interviewees to get their consent on individual responses after every interview.

2.6. Methods of Data Analysis

The thematic analysis was used in the analysis of data obtained from individual interviews since it is a widely used qualitative data analysis technique that involves identifying patterns or themes within a dataset (Crswell, 2014). Through the systematic study of qualitative data, researchers can spot patterns and trends and produce insights that might guide the creation of new theories or useful applications.

Thematic analysis typically involves some important conventional steps including familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing and defining themes, naming and defining themes, and writing up findings (Yin, 2018). As a result, to fully understand the content, researchers needed to immerse themselves in the data by reading transcripts multiple times. This helped in identifying important concepts, ideas, or phrases that are relevant to their research question, which are called codes. The themes were then thoroughly reviewed and refined to ensure that they precisely reflected the data content and relevance to the research question. Finally, quotes or data examples were used to highlight each subject and substantiate the conclusions drawn from the key findings. The themes as per to this study were parenting, communicating, learning at home, volunteering, decision making, and collaborating with community members to help the education of CwDs.

2.7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations prior to the commencement of data collection, a formal letter from Debre Tabor University, Department of Special Needs and Inclusive Education was delivered to the sample school in order to get permission from their esteemed offices. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the benefits of the study, the rights of the participants and confidentiality. Thus, they were requested to give their consent to participate in all aspects of the study, i.e., being interviewed, and being recorded. In addition, they were assured that any information they would provide remains confidential and only be used for the research purpose.

3. Results

3.1. Parental Involvement in the Education of Children with Disabilities

Most of the activities in which parents' involvement were categorized and thematized within Epstein's six typologies of parental involvement practice in education of children with diverse abilities based on the research questions stated in the introduction section of this study. That is, analysis of interview data from parents and teachers revealed that the involvement of parents in the education of their children with disabilities generally fall within the typology set forth by Epstein.

3.2. Parenting

According to the literature, parenting involves providing basic necessities for children with disabilities, such as clothing, food, and a clean home environment. It also includes setting expectations for children's education and success, purchasing necessary materials, reading with children, and having high expectations for their academic achievement (Epstein, 2001).

In line with this, parents of children with disabilities were asked about their parenting practices and how they support their children's learning in inclusive schools. The interview results indicated that parents were actively involved in most aspects of parenting to promote their children's success. Specifically, they were asked about their involvement in providing basic learning materials for their children. In relation to this, parent 1 explained that:

> *I provide my child with all the basic learning materials they need, such as pens, pencils, exercise books, a sign language dictionary, and a uniform. I even provide more materials to my child with disabilities than I do to my non-disabled child who attends the same school.*

Parent 2 has also similar opinions that:

> *My child received the necessary learning materials so far like pen, paper, pencil, exercise book, uniform and others. I am very grateful for the support that my child has received from donors. However, I want to assure you that if the donors were unable to provide these materials, I would do everything in my power to ensure that my child had everything they needed to succeed in school.*

Furthermore, parent 3 stated that "Whatever the case, at least I could fulfil the necessary learning materials periodically and provide clothes."

Furthermore, regarding to parenting teacher 1 stated that:

> *I have noticed that some parents are unable to provide their children with books and other learning materials on time due to financial problems. Fortunately, schools and non-*

> *governmental organizations often provide learning materials to parents who cannot afford them.*

Participants were also asked to what extent parents of children with disabilities send their children to school well-fed and keep their children clean. In this regard, Teacher 1 acknowledged that:

> *Many parents of children with disabilities struggle to provide for their children's basic needs, such as food and clothing. This is often due to financial constraints. As a result, many children with disabilities do not receive the same level of care and support as their non-disabled peers.*

In addition to providing a quiet study space, parents expressed positive expectations for their children's academic performance and future endeavors. They held high hopes for their children's educational attainment and overall well-being. Parent 1 explained that:

> *I provided a quiet study space for my child and had high expectations for her academic success and future profession as a lawyer. I prioritized her well-being over that of my other child, but I neglected to monitor her extracurricular activities and bedtime.*

Besides, teacher 1 reported that:

> *When I discuss with parents of children with disabilities in my school, I understood that they wish bright future in terms of success in learning. Since I worked with parents, many times they discussed with schools about their children's success in education.*

Generally speaking, parents of children with disabilities generally fulfill basic parenting obligations, such as providing food, supplies, guidance, a conducive environment, and safety. However, teachers often blame parents for their lack of involvement in feeding and hygiene, which negatively impacts their children's learning. Despite these challenges, parents of children with disabilities have high expectations for their children's academic and career success.

It is important to note that the lack of parental involvement in these areas may be due to various factors, such as the challenges of parenting a child with a disability, limited resources, or cultural norms. Nevertheless, it is crucial to address this issue, as it can have a significant impact on the child's academic progress and overall well-being.

3.3. Communicating

The second dimension of parental involvement focuses on communication between parents and schools about their children's education. This includes discussions about educational plans and progress reports, using various communication methods (e.g., verbal, written) to support the child's schooling (Epstein, 2009).

In the sample school, both teachers and parents observed that some parents of children with disabilities were highly engaged in school activities and their children's education. For instance, Parent 1 remarked:

> *I even did not know the name of my child's teachers teaching schedule, time table and daily routines. However, I participated in trainings and conferences organized by the school at least once per semester to discuss on disability issues and our children's learning.*

Teacher 2 also explained that:

> *During my six years as a teacher here, I've noticed that only a small number of parents regularly meet with teachers and school principals to discuss their children's education. Despite sending out meeting invitations, few parents attend. When I inquire with students why their parents don't come, they typically respond that their parents are too busy. However, I've observed that parents of children with disabilities are more likely to attend conferences when a daily allowance is provided by sponsors.*

The researchers argued that most of the parents of children with disabilities come to school in two times per year. One is at the end of the first semester. The other is in the end of the academic year of the school since parents are familiar with these events and notice was posted at school and also invitation letter sends to parents' home.

Parents were also asked about what forms of communication they used to communicate with the schools. They responded that they communicated through letter and by phone. Besides, data from interview items by parent and teacher participants showed that different ways of communication are employed by parents to communicate with teachers and school administration in general. Accordingly, parents many times communicate with schools through letter, telephone calling, others would prefer face-to-face communication, still for others written notes or home–school diaries suited for the contact with schools.

In relation with this, parent 2 responded that:

> *Though it was not frequent, one of the good teachers of my child calls me and asks about my child's condition like how my child communicates with family members. I like these teachers while they called and send letters for invitation of meetings and workshops with school communities since they were with me.*

Similarly, teacher 1 reported that "In my opinion, most parents of children with disabilities do not involve in meetings and conferences if there is no daily allowance. We teachers invited parents to talk about their children's learning but mostly they did not come to take part in the discussions and we sometimes heard that students did not give the invitation letter at home."

This study found that parents of children with disabilities did not frequently discuss issues related to their children's education with teachers or principals. Parents justified this lack of communication by stating that they believed it was the responsibility of a few parent representatives (PSTA members) to communicate with school staff about issues affecting all students. As a result, many parents rarely visited the school and did not feel the need to communicate directly with their children's teachers about their education. However, parents did participate in school-organized conferences.

This lack of communication between parents and school staff may have implications for the education of children with disabilities. Parents are important partners in their children's education, and their input can help teachers and administrators better understand the needs of their students. When parents are not actively involved in their children's education, it can be more difficult for schools to provide the necessary support and services.

Regarding knowledge of school policies, rules, and regulations, parents of children with disabilities in this study reported having low levels of knowledge. They were not familiar with the school's plans, policies, and laws, including disciplinary measures. Parents also reported that they were not typically involved in discussions about disciplinary measures taken to correct their children's behavior.

Moreover, parents of children with disabilities in this study reported that teachers would call them whenever there was a disciplinary problem. However, parents often did not come to school to participate in discussions about their children's education. This lack of involvement may be due to a number of factors, including parents' lack of knowledge about school policies and procedures, as well as their belief that it is the responsibility of a few parent representatives (PSTA members) to communicate with school staff about issues affecting all students.

Therefore, this study revealed that parents of children with disabilities did not frequently discuss issues linked to their children’s education with both teachers and principals of the schools. The participants justified the reason why they did not meet or contact with their children’s teachers. They believed that it is the responsibility of few parents who are members of PSTA to discuss with teachers and principals of the school regarding problems occurring in the schooling of children. Due to this reason, many parents visit the school occasionally and even they did not have the

slightest idea of the need to deal with classroom teachers about their children education. However, parents did participate in conferences organized by the schools.

3.4. Learning at Home

The mutual effort of parents and school towards learning at home is the most important element to the success of children with special educational needs (Epstein, 2001). Regarding parents' involvement in learning at home activities, the interviewees explained that the practice of supporting children with disabilities at home learning activities like checking their homework daily, asking questions, monitoring activities and providing feedback to their children was not encouraging. However, parents of children with disabilities did not regularly monitor or check their children's home activities at home.

In this connection, parent 1 reflected that:

> *I believe that teachers are the only responsible one in supporting their children's learning. To be honest, I was not doing my best to help my child in different activities of learning at home. I did not have any habit to read with my child. The reason was I do not recognize the subject matter students learnt and that limited my involvement.*

Consistently, teacher 1 reported that:

> *Though most of the parents of children with disabilities assumed not to have subject matter knowledge across different courses their children are engaged, I have observed that few parents assist their children with their homework and assignments. But, most parents of children with disabilities think that teachers should handle every aspect of education and they consider teachers as the only professional to their children's education.*

Teacher 2 elucidated that:

> *Parents of children with disabilities are less likely to have the support and monitor their children while children tried to do their homework, assignment and project works at home. These parents do not provide any feedback regarding their participation in the education of their children with disabilities so far in our school. However, I have observed that some parents of children without disabilities have a tradition of monitoring and supervising of their children homework and giving feedback when homework is offered.*

Participants also noted that many parents of children with disabilities are uneducated and low-income, which limits their involvement in their children's learning at home. These parents may not be able to assist their children with homework or provide support due to their own lack of education and skills. Additionally, they may not view helping their children with homework as their responsibility, especially if they do not have the necessary skills, such as Braille writing and

reading. In the context of the current study, it is assumed that parents are not primarily responsible for their children's education at home.

3.5. Volunteering

The fourth type of parental involvement is volunteering to support the learning of children with disabilities. According to the respondents of this study, parents of children with disabilities had low levels of involvement in volunteering activities to support their children's education in inclusive schools. Related with this, parent1 stated his opinion as follows:

> *My child has stayed in this school for more than four years and I have never participated in volunteering activities like in classroom assistance, school trips and sport festivals. I did not have any time that teachers invite me to help my child's education till now.*

Parent 4 also reported that "I had no reason in involving in volunteering to assist primary schools in the classroom because I believed that teachers who thought my child did not allow parents in assisting in classroom."

Furthermore, teacher 1 reflected that:

> *Many parents of children with disabilities were initially hesitant to actively participate in their children's education. They believed that education was primarily the responsibility of schools and teachers once children were enrolled. Parents were unaware of their role in supporting their children's learning. When invited by school staff to volunteer in school activities, most parents cited attendance issues as a barrier, believing that organizations outside the school should address these challenges.*

The parents were also asked whether they have done any fundraising for the school voluntarily.

However, they did not take part in this activity for the school. In this case parent 1 stated that:

> *I have never found myself involved in any fundraising event until now. Because this not my role expected to be handled. Further, such fundraising should be facilitated by the school than parents of children with disabilities.*

Thus, participants argued that parents of children with disabilities did not participate in volunteering activities at school like assisting classroom teachers because parents totally did not have such traditions in schools. Thus, it is possible to mark that voluntary involvement of parents in the education of children with disabilities was poor and misunderstood.

3.6. Decision Making Process

The fifth dimension of parental involvement in the education of children with disabilities is decision making in the key areas of learning. This type of involvement includes parents being involved in making decisions at school and developing parent leaders and representatives like in parent-student-

teacher association and other related committees for involvement. In this research, parents of children with SENs were asked the extent of their participation in decision making process to the success of their children schooling. In relation with parental involvement in decision making process, parent 2 stated the following:

> *Parent-student–teacher association (PSTA) members are the most responsible bodies regarding school teaching and learning. Thus, I did not have any role in decision making process. Besides, I was not the member of the PSTA and other school related committee to support the education of children with disabilities in the school. Also, I believe that participating in decision making is not my role.*

Parent-Student-Teacher Association is expected mostly to let parents know about decisions made in relation with the education of children. The association also asked parents to contribute money for the school purpose. In this regard, parent 3 reported that:

> *Most of the time, I did not know how PSTA members participated in decision making process. I and the members meet one time once per year at the end of the school year. Even, I was not aware of the roles of the members of the association and the areas of decision making till the end of the school year. I was not a member in any committee.*

Most parents, including those with children with disabilities, generally participated in annual planning sessions. Additionally, they were involved in the implementation and evaluation aspects of school plans twice a year. During these sessions, parents of children with disabilities actively participated in decision-making processes related to various school activities, such as assessing strengths, identifying opportunities, and addressing weaknesses in the teaching and learning process.

Parents of children with disabilities in this study reported low levels of involvement in decision-making processes at their children's schools. The researchers argue that this lack of involvement may be due to policy gaps that limit the decision-making powers of parents. Parents reported that decision-making was typically carried out by members of the Parent-School-Teacher Association (PSTA), and that sometimes decisions were made without involving parents at all.

3.7. Collaborating with Communities

Regarding educational activities outside the classroom, none of the parents of children with disabilities in the study area reported participating in educational trips or tours related to their children's education. Furthermore, neither parents nor teachers participated in community forums specifically dedicated to discussing issues and matters related to the education of children with

disabilities. Additionally, parents of children with disabilities were not involved in community sports clubs or activities. In connection with this, teacher 2 reported that:

> *Parents of children with disabilities did not participate in local associations, religious institutions, non-governmental organizations to help their children with their education actively. To the best of my knowledge, I have never seen any parent of children with disabilities who participated in these activities done in collaboration with the community up until now.*

The analysis indicated that parents were not actively engaged with community members to help the education of children with disabilities. Specifically, participants confirmed that parents of children with disabilities did not perform activities in collaboration with communities like religious institutions, local associations and business agencies like hotels.

4. Discussion

The results of the present study provide valuable insights into the topic of PI in the education of CwDs in primary schools and have important implications for endorsing school-parent partnership in the education system. The results also have implications for re-visiting parents' role in the education of their children both at home school. Hence, in this section, results are discussed in line with the research question of the study.

4.1. Status of Parental Involvement in the Education of CwDs

The findings were discussed based on the theoretical framework suggested by Epstein. Considering all dimensions of PI together (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community), the involvement of parents in the education of CwDs was minimal. Accordingly, each dimension is presented and discussed in the following sub-sections.

4.2. Parenting

Parents play a significant role in their children's education, particularly in providing basic support and nurturing a positive learning environment at home. This research found that parents are more actively involved in this "parenting" dimension than in other areas of educational involvement, likely driven by their high hopes for their children's future success. Interviews revealed that parents actively contribute by providing learning materials and creating a supportive home environment that encourages learning. Current research findings strongly support previous studies (Ibrahim, 2012; Mwaikimu, 2012) which emphasize the crucial role of parents in providing basic parenting

activities within primary schools. These studies highlight that effective parenting extends beyond simply providing for a child's physical needs, and emphasizes the importance of consistent involvement and engagement in the child's educational journey. Similarly, Peiffer (2015) argued that parents were involved well in basic parenting provisions in secondary schools. Parents patronize that by supplying the learning materials to support children's learning at any time and cost. The report stated that parents had a good level of consciousness about their parenting obligations to facilitate the learning of children with and without disabilities.

The heightened involvement of parents in parenting activities could stem from a deep-seated understanding of their parental obligations. Parents may inherently perceive these activities as fundamental to their role as caregivers. Additionally, the increased engagement of parents with children with disabilities (CwDs) might be attributed to the concerted efforts of governmental and non-governmental organizations (GOs and NGOs) in promoting positive attitudes towards inclusion. These initiatives, aimed at dispelling negative perceptions among parents and teachers, have likely played a significant role in empowering parents to actively support their children with disabilities.

4.3. Communicating

While effective communication between parents and school communities is crucial for enhancing children's education, interview data revealed a significant gap in this area for parents of children with disabilities (CwDs). The study found that most parents of CwDs were not actively participating in communication activities like meetings and discussions with teachers about their children's progress. This finding aligns with previous research by Yonson (2016) which indicated a decline in parental involvement in communication activities, including conferences and meetings with the school community. Similarly, Zhang (2012) and Williams (2017) observed a lack of frequent communication between Chinese parents and teachers, encompassing discussions about social interactions, learning challenges, progress, and daily routines in kindergarten. These findings highlight a consistent trend of limited communication between parents of CwDs and school personnel, suggesting a need for targeted interventions to improve this critical aspect of parental involvement.

Previous research on parental involvement in communication activities paints a contrasting picture compared to the current study's findings. Studies focused on the general student population (Erlendsdottir, 2010; Hornby, 2011; Mwaikimu, 2012; Kavanagh, 2013) revealed a higher level of parental engagement in communication with teachers and principals. Vanderpuye's (2013) study on inclusive pilot schools in Ghana also documented regular parental involvement in communication about all aspects of their children's inclusive education (IE).

However, the current study's findings indicate a lower level of communication between parents of CwDs and school personnel. Several factors may contribute to this discrepancy. Firstly, previous studies may not have specifically considered parents of CwDs in their sample populations. Secondly, negative attitudes towards disability and the schooling of CwDs among some parents may contribute to their reluctance to communicate with school staff. Additionally, lower levels of education among some parents may create a barrier to frequent communication with teachers and principals.

The study's results highlight the need for educators and administrators to actively encourage and support the involvement of parents of CwDs in their children's education. Recognizing the importance of parental involvement, the Ethiopian government has emphasized its significance, underscoring the necessity for collaborative efforts between schools and parents to enhance communication and ultimately improve educational outcomes for children with disabilities.

4.4. Learning at Home

The current research revealed a low level of parental involvement in learning at home activities to support the education of children with disabilities (CwDs). This lack of engagement stems from barriers related to a lack of knowledge and skills among parents. The findings align with previous studies (Hornby, 2011; Williams, 2017) which also reported a low participation rate of parents of CwDs in learning at home activities. These studies attributed this to a lack of familiarity with the challenges faced by their children and a deficiency in basic skills needed to support their learning. Furthermore, Strauss and Burger (2000) found that parents with limited education often struggle to assist their children with homework, suggesting a possible link between educational background and parental involvement.

While some studies (Deslandes and Bertrand, 2005) argued that parents perceive home learning activities as the sole responsibility of teachers, other research on the general student population (Washington, 2011; Van Voorhis, 2003) indicated a higher level of parental involvement in monitoring and supervising homework.

The discrepancy between findings may be attributed to several factors, including negative attitudes towards disability among some parents and the specific contexts of the studies. The current research highlights the need for teachers and principals to actively educate parents of CwDs about the importance of their involvement in their children's academic success. Collaboration between teachers and parents is crucial to foster a supportive learning environment at home, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes for children with disabilities.

4.5. Volunteering

This study investigated parental involvement in volunteering, specifically focusing on how it impacts children with disabilities (CwDs). The findings revealed a significant reluctance among parents of CwDs to engage in school-based volunteering. This aligns with previous research that observed a general underutilization of parent volunteering in education, both for CwDs and general student populations.

Researchers suggest that this reluctance stems from a lack of awareness and understanding surrounding the benefits of parent volunteering in supporting children with disabilities. Studies by Vanderpuye (2013) and El Shourbagi (2017) found that parents expressed a lack of enthusiasm for activities like classroom assistance, field trips, and fundraising, even when requested.

While Hornby (2011) highlights the value of volunteering in helping parents understand their children better, this potential benefit remains largely untapped. The study emphasizes a disconnect between parents and school staff, with teachers and principals not actively encouraging or recognizing parental involvement. This disconnect leads to an underutilization of parental involvement, which parents often perceive as belonging solely to the school.

The study concludes with a call to action for the government and other relevant organizations to facilitate and encourage greater parental involvement in volunteering, highlighting its potential impact on children's academic success.

4.6. Decision Making

The results from the interviews gave further clarification on the issue. For example, it was reported that some parents participated in the decision-making process during the annual school meeting together with PSTA members. The current researcher supposed parents' low level of involvement might be due to a negative attitude of school communities towards parents and CwDs. This may be because schools mainly focus on parent representatives. If so, there will be the need to work on awareness-raising campaigns for the community at large and for teachers in particular, which may tackle the negative belief that parents and other community members have. In support of the finding, Zhang (2012) advised no Chinese immigrant parents of the elementary and secondary school students participated in school decision-making because of factors related to lack of invitation opportunities.

This finding is analogous with preceding findings that pronounced the involvement of parents in the decision-making process was under the anticipated level (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Mwaikimu, 2012; Flemmings, 2013; Dameh, 2015; Cetin and Taskin, 2016; Wakjira, 2017). The authors cited that parents were not involved in the decision-making process frequently. The study conducted by Erdogan and Demirkasimoglu (2010) further stated that parents never involved in the decision-making process because of the centralized school system that did not legitimize parents as part of the decision made by schools. The above findings have implications for indicating how much the problem is severe and suggesting to design intervention strategy to tackle the problem.

4.7. Collaborating with Community

This study found that parents of children with disabilities (CwDs) were generally inactive in collaborating with community organizations, such as media outlets, hotels, and local agencies, to support their children's education. Parents believed that these roles were primarily the responsibility of teachers and school principals. While most parents were hesitant to engage in collaborative activities, a few parents showed initiative. Two parents from one school proactively invited NGOs and media organizations to help identify resources for their children's education.

The study suggests that the low level of parental involvement in collaborations could be linked to feelings of shame associated with having a child with a disability. This aligns with previous research, including Mwaikimu (2012), Wakjira (2017), and Ujudi (2018), which observed a general

lack of parental engagement in community collaboration efforts. These studies indicate that parents often feel they lack the skills or knowledge to contribute to these initiatives. Additionally, a study by Adams et al. (2016) in Peninsular Malaysia echoed these findings, showing minimal parental participation in collaborative efforts within primary and secondary schools for children with disabilities.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

Parents of children with disabilities play a crucial role in their children's education. Their involvement can positively impact their children's academic, social, and emotional development. In the present study, it has been found that parents of children with disabilities have varying levels of involvement in their children's education. While they are involved in some aspects, such as in providing learning materials and creating a positive learning environment at home, they should improve their involvement in other areas, such as participating in school decision-making, monitoring their children's learning, and volunteering in school activities. Besides, parents were found to have low involvement in volunteering and collaborating in community activities regularly to facilitate the education of their children with disabilities.

This study has implications for theory, practice and policy. The study promotes policies that support and encourage active PI in the education of children with disabilities. This could include establishing clear communication channels between parents and schools, and ensuring that parents have a voice in decision-making processes. In addition, educators need to recognize and value the diverse ways in which parents of children with disabilities are involved in their children's education. Schools need to develop strategies to improve communication between parents and teachers. Lastly, the study reinforces the importance of parental involvement as a key factor in the education of children with disabilities.

5.2. Recommendation

The study's findings reveal a low level of parental involvement in the education of children with disabilities (CwDs) in Tabor Primary school, Debre Tabor city administration. To address this, the city's education office, school management bodies, and parent-student-teacher-associations (PSTAs) need to take action. They must educate parents of CwDs about their vital role in their children's education and development. This includes providing information about the various

dimensions of parental involvement (PI) and highlighting the importance of areas where parental participation is currently lacking. In essence, the goal is to empower parents of CwDs with the knowledge and understanding they need to actively participate in their children's educational journey, focusing on areas where their involvement is most critical.

To foster parental involvement in the education of children with disabilities, teachers should make home visits to parents. These visits should not only assess the current level of parental involvement but also aim to build parental confidence and competence. Through these visits, teachers can provide valuable support, including counseling, guidance, and skill training, both for parents and their children. This targeted support can empower parents to play a more active and effective role in their child's education. By actively engaging with parents in their home environment, teachers can create a more collaborative and supportive relationship that enhances the educational experience for both parents and children.

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Original Article

Exploring attributes impeding students' classroom oral interactions and participation in EFL classes: Kotebe University of Education in Focus

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Abstract

This study explores the attributes impeding students' classroom oral interaction and participation in EFL classes. Descriptive survey research design was employed to carry out the study. The research included fifty (50) students out of 148 target population, which is 33.8%. It also involved twelve English language instructors out of 34 members using convenient sampling technique. As the student population was grouped into sections, stratified and random systematic sampling techniques were employed to determine the specific representative samples. Data were collected using questionnaire, semi-structured interview and rating scale. The collected data were analyzed using mixed research method (qualitative and quantitative approach). The result reveals that eleven classroom oral interaction and participation impeding attributes are found to be rated by more than 50% of the respondents. Most of the identified attributes are allied to teacher's and students' personal perceptions, lesson delivery styles, learning topics, fear of criticisms, external pressures, classroom social impacts, lack of prior experience, and overuse of mother tongue as a way out of English speaking stress. It was concluded that most impeding classroom attributes were found to be rooted from psychological, social, pedagogical, linguistic and communicative competences.

Key Words: explore, attributes, impeding, classroom, oral, interactions, participations, EFL

1. Introduction

Scholars, language researchers and experts have emphasized the importance of language learning environment which generates realistic, spontaneous, functional and context-based interactions in the classroom (Johnson, 1995; Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Davison & Dowason, 2003; Days, 1984). Conducive learning environment creates favorable situation that can enhance and enrich students' interactive competency. The classroom students' interactions need to stimulate and sustain learners' interests and motivations to engage in genuine oral interactions. The activities and tasks should have

dynamic effect to move the students from predetermined textbook tasks to a lively interactive, reflective or expressive learning behavior where students get more chance to express and exchange their ideas and thoughts independently of the teacher (Prodromou, 1992; Hedge, 2000).

Participatory classroom oral interaction provides the students with not only the opportunity to practically explore their knowledge of the language to express their own thoughts and intentions, but also it helps them gain better progressive experience of their personal values such as: developing self-confidence, social interactive skills, the sense of risk-taking for their own learning, and the ability to adjust one's speech in accordance with the listener (or audience), the point in focus and the actual context.

Classroom oral interaction helps learners to internalize and enrich their experience of language in use and then produce spontaneous speech (Johnson, 1995; Chaudron, 1988; Littlewood, 1984). More importantly, students efforts to speak in English provides them with authentic and plentiful learning opportunities (Brumfit, 1984; Celec-Murcia, 1991), and better chance to learn from each other's' differential experiences (Johnson, 1995).

Likewise, psychological factors and socio-cultural contexts have gained new interest and emphasis in the classroom practices, even if such points may still remain unsure of how best to exploit them effectively. The tradition of being dependent on linguistic theory and/or on an exclusively 'best' teaching method has come to be outdated, and so, most educators and scholars would seem to agree on a common consensus of using eclectic approaches in teaching language. Language textbooks have begun to be designed in a way that they incorporate authentic and genuine topics and texts, (e.g. advertisement texts, 'medical' reports, articles 'from newspapers', etc.) alongside literary texts (literature extracts). The belief of teacher dominant and teacher initiative of learning has become learner and learning focused and cooperative or collaborative learning. It is, therefore, in the context of these multifarious pedagogical evolutions that the role of classroom oral interactions and participations has increasingly received the attention of modern language researchers.

On the other hand, some scholars and educators have suggested that there are different influencing attributes that inhibit students' classroom oral interactions and their participations. To Bygate (1987) one of the most painstaking tasks in foreign language teaching is to provide the learners with better opportunities to be able to use the language interactively. Similarly, scholars like Johnson (1995), Lier, Van (1988) and Byrne (1986) have proposed that language teaching is an interactive process,

primarily involving classroom interactions between teacher and students, and among students. However, since some factors interfere between language learning and students participations, the students may not gain the necessary language skills, and so, they may become less successful in their oral interactive skills (Brown, 1994).

Malamha-Thomas (1987) has had similar, yet, more detailed views. He describes that a teacher often comes to class with planned objectives and activities. He/ She acts in the classroom according to his/ her plan: presents the lesson; asks questions, make the students do activities; elicit responses from them in different ways and techniques. The students react to the lesson following the teacher's instruction sometimes respond correctly, whereas at other times fail to perform or act as expected by the teacher; and still in some cases, they may remain silent, showing no apparent effort to react to the teacher's action. The teacher may not be curious enough to try to search out why are the students silent, or confused, or failed to act as expected or indifferent or even reluctant to participate.

Rather, he/she may be busy to act in accordance with his/her predetermined plan in spite of the actual classroom reactions. However, 'Interaction is more than this, more than action followed by reaction. Interaction means acting reciprocally, acting up on each other's ideas' (Malamha-Thomas, 1987, p.7). The classroom climate by itself should have the power to initiate a reaction on the teacher's actions and approach in order to influence not only his/ her immediate action, more importantly, to adjust his/ her subsequent plans. Thus, classroom interaction is also the outcome of genuine interactive influences and adjustments of approaches and focuses on the participants (Hedge 2000; Rivers 1987) that can encourage their efforts to exploit the actual learning experiences created during the classroom time (Littlewood 1992; Byrne 1987; Bygate 1987).

An important fact to note is that learning English and using it does not only need mastering its grammatical and semantic rules, but more significantly, the skill of how it operates in the real world, including in varied contexts of interpersonal exchanges, and negotiations of thoughts (Shumin (1997). As a result, unless we are able to identify those major attributes that affect EFL learners' oral proficiency, it is difficult for the learners to speak in English confidently and appropriately in a given situation. Shumin (1997) further argues that it is mainly believed that Oral English skills '…can be developed by assigning students general topics to discuss or by getting them to talk about certain subjects. Evidently, not enough attention is given to the factors that inhibit or facilitate the production of spoken language' (p.8).

In the same way, Allwright & Bailey (1991) do have the view that verbal interaction in the classroom is one of the most challenging things in the practical classroom setting. Students may be unwilling to speak because the teacher's teaching strategy would be at odd with their opinions or expectations of how best to practice oral skills, or because in some cases, students may want to speak out but feel inhibited to get their messages across, or because there may be some other factors that hinder students' oral production abilities. In the words of Allwright & Bailey (1991), it can be stated as:

> *…. it is a dangerous oversimplification to suggest that verbal interaction in the classroom is just a case of 'the more the merrier'. This topic would bear much more exploration and is certainly an area where language learners could be profitably involved in the search enterprise (p. 145).*

In addition, the other problem according to (Byrne, 1986; Tusi, 1995; Hedge, 2000), that students are less motivated to discuss or talk about an activity/task which fails to meet their interests and needs, and which may not be important or related to the actual real-world communicative needs.

Besides, what is most challenging in EFL classes, according to Seedhouse (1996), is that even teachers who call themselves communicative in their approach 'fail to create opportunities for genuine interaction in the language classroom' (p.16). Research findings, for example, Dornyie & Thurrell (1994) show that most language teachers employ a kind of interaction which reflects – *IRF Cycle*: teacher initiation-learner response-teacher follow-up (p.17), which mainly reflects traditional classroom interaction. Here, what has utmost importance to be considered is that 'One of the biggest challenges to current language teaching methodology is to find effective ways of preparing students for spontaneous communication' (Dornyie & Thurrell 1994, p. 40).

Correspondingly, Teshome Tessema (1988) found out that students who came from different parts of Ethiopia have got poor language experience and so they are less active in classroom oral interactions. As a result, it is too challenging to create lively classroom oral discussion for most teachers in the country. To this effect, the focus of this study would be exploring and identifying the major attributes impeding students' classroom oral interactions and participations in English classes at Kotebe University of Education.

2. Importance of the Study

The outcome of this study can give important insights into what and how different influential attributes contribute to various classroom oral interactions and students' participations. It provides up-to-date valuable sources of data about the attributes impeding English classroom oral interactions

and students participation both for teacher educators interested in preparing more effective language teachers, and for classroom teachers interested in examining their own ways of teaching, and perceptions of the nature of classroom interactions and participations.

Sometimes, what is gained from theory may not be exactly observable or applicable in the actual classroom settings. As a result, course designers and language teachers need to be provided with research supported inputs that help them get better awareness on the importance of observing and identifying the major impeding attributes that inhibit students' oral performances.

The study could also add a conceptual framework to classroom pedagogical practices, and so it would hint where adjustments are to be made to create better classroom learning opportunities for the students.

3. Methodology

The target population for this study was third year English major degree students at Kotebe University of Education in 2022. Third year students were selected due to their seniority and years of university experiences in classroom oral interaction experiences. In particular, senior students are not only believed to have developed better language skills and experiences, but also they are assumed to have better awareness on the challenges of classroom oral interactions and participations.

The total population of the study was 148. As the target population was grouped in to three sections- that is, G_1= 49; G_2=49, and G_3=50, it was decided to use stratified and systematic random sampling techniques in order to get the representative sample of each group (William Wiersma 1995:290-292). That is, to determine the sample size to be taken from each group, it is determined to apply the formula: $\mathbf{n/N \times Ni}$;

Where **n**= Total number of sample wanted- (fifty students)

N= Total number of target population- (148)

Ni = the number of each stratum size

As the number of students in each group was almost the same, the number of representative samples of the three groups was also the same. It was also decided to round-off every digit to the nearest whole number to avoid fraction numbers. Thus, 17 students from G_1 and G3, and16 students from G_2 were selected. As a result, the total sample when added up the samples of the three groups is 50 students. That is to say, the study has covered **33.8%** of the total target population. In addition, 12

English instructors were selected from 34 staff members using convenient sampling technique. The teachers were identified based on their teaching experiences.

3.1. Data Collection Methods

To obtain information from the participants of the study, three data gathering instruments were used: semi-structured interview, questionnaire and rating scale. Firstly, a structured interview was presented to 12 instructors of English language Department. The responses gathered using structured interview were analyzed and compared with the responses of the students which were collected through open-ended questionnaire. The major purpose of the interview was to triangulate the results of the questionnaire.

To gather the necessary data from the students, open-ended questionnaire of seventeen items were prepared and administrated to the students. The main objective of the questionnaire was to elicit the students' responses to attributes that they think became barriers to classroom oral interaction. Next, close-ended questionnaire based on the students' responses to the first open-ended questionnaire was designed. In this case, the main objective of the questionnaire was to explore the extent to which those influencing attributes, which had been enumerated by the students, impeded the students' attempts of oral interaction and participation in English classes. The major common attributes were identified, organized and re-administrated to the students so as to rate the extent to which each of those factors exerted an influence on their attempts to participate in English classroom oral interactions. Then, their responses were tabulated and analyzed in relation to the responses of the English language instructors and the ideas of those scholars that have already been discussed in the study.

3.2. Data Collection procedures

To elicit adequate information from the participants of the study, first, the purpose and importance of the research was explained to the participants of the study. The questionnaire was administered in a face-to-face situation. Then, depending on the information gathered through the questionnaire, a five point Likert scale rating was organized and administered to the students.

3.3. Data Analysis Techniques

To analyze the responses of the participants of the study, quantitative and qualitative methods were used. To accomplish this, first, the responses of students and teachers at different levels were organized, tabulated and analyzed. The responses were described in percentage based of tabular

frequency distribution. The interview results were analyzed qualitatively. In addition, the responses were discussed in relation to the ideas of the scholars that had been incorporated in the study.

3.4. Ethical Consideration

The researcher consulted teachers and student participants before the study was delivered. The researcher explained the purpose of the study clearly and comprehensibly for all potential participants who were willing to partake in this research. Any communication and discussion with the participants was accomplished on a voluntary basis without threatening the personal and academic well-being of the respondents. In addition, the respondents were guaranteed that all information obtained from them would be secured and kept confidentially.

4. Results, Analysis and Discussions

4.1. Results and Analysis

The collected data of the study consisted of twenty-nine impeding attributes that were reported by the students. These first impeding attributes were taken from the students' responses to the first turn open-ended questionnaire consisting of seventeen items. Elven most frequently repeated attributes were identified and reorganized.

Then, to identify the extent to which each identified attributes which impeded students' oral interactions and classroom participation in EFL classes, the students were requested to indicate the level of frequency by ticking (✓) under each of the eleven items using a five-point likert scale rating:

Very often true of me = 5, Often true of me = 4, Sometimes true of me = 3, Rarely true of me = 2, and Never true of me = 1

To finalize the rated data, in spite of some differences in the degree of frequency between rating 5 and 4-(i.e. very often and often), this two rating, in general, indicates the higher prevalence of the problems. Hence, the total number and percentage of the two rating scales (i.e. 5 and 4) were added up and labeled as 'confirmed' to indicate the number and percentage of respondents who highly agreed in the presence of the impeding attributes during classroom oral discussions and participations. On the other hand, the number and percentage of the students, who rated the alternatives 'rarely' and 'never' were summed up and labeled 'rejected, to show the absence of the problem compared to the frequency of the former two options. Finally, the number and percentage of those students who rated

'sometimes' were indicated separately, and labeled 'middle' in or der to demonstrate the above two extremes.

4.1.1. Results of the Questionnaire

The main identified impeding attributes and the responses of the students are illustrated in a table and described and analyzed in percentage based on the frequency distribution table.

This section treats the responses to the questionnaires which were rated by 50% and above as influencing attributes during classroom discussions and participations. Note that the impeding attributes are listed in accordance with the frequency with which each influences the students' attempts to hold interaction through speaking, the corresponding number (N) and the percentage (%) of the respondents.

Table 4.1: Major impeding attributes rated by 50% and above of the Respondents

	Impeding attributes	**Number and Percentage of the Respondents**						
		Confirmed		**Middle**		**Rejected**		
		F	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	
1	Due to lack of feedback on my oral work, I do not know how much I have improved my oral performance	**33**	**66**	**11**	**22**	**5**	**10**	
2	I lack enough chances to practice speaking English due to inaccessibility to audio-visuals and language lab.	**31**	**62**	**10**	**20**	**9**	**18**	
3	My English teacher does not give me enough time to practice speaking in class.	**30**	**60**	**16**	**32**	**4**	**8**	
4	I lack confidence to speak English in class.	**29**	**58**	**17**	**34**	**4**	**8**	
5	The way my teacher teaches English does not help me to express my opinions freely.	**29**	**58**	**11**	**22**	**10**	**20**	
6	Lack of chances to give oral comments or feedbacks on my classmates' oral work as this can extend my oral English practice.	**28**	**56**	**17**	**34**	**5**	**10**	

7	I feel self-conscious when I speak in English due to fear of making mistakes.	**27**	**54**	**16**	**32**	**7**	**14**	
8	When I want to speak in English I face shortage of words.	**26**	**52**	**17**	**34**	**7**	**14**	
9.	I lack the skills of giving responses in a complete sentence when my teacher asks me a question.	**25**	**50**	**17**	**34**	**8**	**16**	
10	I dislike classroom topics for oral discussion because they are not related to our local situation needs.	**25**	**50**	**16**	**32**	**9**	**18**	
11	I face shortage of ideas when I want to speak in English.	**25**	**50**	**16**	**32**	**12**	**24**	

Table 4.1 reveals the first attribute is found to be the most frequently impeding attributes during classroom oral interaction. As can be seen from Table 3.1, 66% of the respondents confirmed that they are not given feedback on their oral performance, and so they could not know how much they show progress or change in their speaking skills. That is to say, thirty-three out of fifty students reported that lack of feedback on their verbal abilities is often the most influencing attributes in their attempts to speak English in classes. While 22%, that is, eleven out of fifty students rated it as a challenge that sometimes negatively affect their speaking attempts, 12%, that is, only six out of fifty students rejected the influence of not getting feedback on their oral performances.

As illustrated in Table 4.1, the second ranked item is rated by 62% of the respondents. They reported lack of the support of audio-visuals and language lab as the most dominant constraints of their oral interactions skills. In other words, thirty-one out of fifty students confirmed this problem as the most prevailing factor that negatively affects their oral performance during classroom discussions. The table also shows that 20% of the respondents reported they sometimes consider inaccessibility to audio-visuals and language lab as barrier to improving their oral proficiency. As a result, though the extent to which the respondents think that this problem influences their speaking abilities, it would sound reasonable to say that almost 82% of the students indicated lack of enough chance to practice speaking supported by audio-visuals and language lab could impede their oral production abilities.

The third prominent attribute, according to Table 4.1, is lack of enough time to practice speaking in class. While 60% of the students confirmed the negative influence of shortage of practice time during oral interaction, 32% of the remaining students reported that shortage of practice time to some extent

affects their chance to communicate their ideas or opinions orally during classroom interaction. The Table also shows that only 8% of the respondents indicated that they do not consider shortage of time to practice speaking in class as impeding attribute to their verbal skills during classroom interaction. In brief, the result illustrates how much lack of enough practice time in class prevails in the English classes though the degree of occurrence differs.

Fourthly, as is evidenced from Table 4.1, 58%, or twenty-nine students out of fifty, strongly approved that one of the major barriers to speak in English during classroom discussion is lack of confidence in their oral skills. Again, 34% of the remaining students rated this factor as the attribute that they sometimes encounter during discussions. Only 8%, that is to say, four of the fifty respondents ignored the influence of this attribute on their oral abilities. Accordingly, it would appear that 92% of the respondents tended to reflect the existence of such impeding attribute during classroom oral interactions.

In the fifth level, Table 4.1 reveals that 58% of the students indicated that they are not often interested in the way their teacher teaches English because it does not provide them with the opportunity to express their thoughts or feelings freely. That means, twenty-nine of the fifty students responded that they are disappointed in the way their teacher approaches the lesson. While 22% of the students rated this attribute as the problem that sometimes impede their oral interactions, 20% of the remaining students did not recognize this factor as a problem to their oral skills.

In the sixth level, the majority of the respondents would seem to claim that oral comments or feedbacks on their classmates' oral work could help them to extend their oral production abilities beyond a limited classroom speaking practices. Accordingly, while 56%, that is twenty-eight out of fifty students confirmed that lack of chances to give oral comments or feedbacks on their classmates' oral work often limited the potential of their oral proficiency, 34%, that is to say, seventeen out of fifty students reported that they sometimes consider this attribute as impeding attribute to their attempts to participate in oral interaction practices. Only 10%; i.e. five students ignored the influence of this factor on their classroom verbal interaction.

As can be seen from Table 4.1, the seventh ranked attribute is linked to fear of making mistakes. The Table depicts that twenty-seven out of fifty respondents confirmed the impeding effect of feeling self-consciousness due to fear of making mistakes during discussions. Thirty-two out of the fifty students

reported that they sometimes consider feeling self-consciousness due to fear of making mistakes as their oral communication barriers during classroom discussion. In other words, while 54% of the respondents rated this item as their most often impending attribute, 32% of the participants of the study identified this factor as the problem that they sometimes face during discussion. Only seven students or 14% of the respondents attempted to neglect the influence of being conscious of one's language use while discussion.

As can be referred from Table 4.1, the eighth ranked attribute related to classroom verbal interaction is vocabulary potential. As can be evidenced from the table, 52% of the respondents highly approved that their major impeding attribute during classroom discussion is shortage of vocabulary. While, 34% of the students reported the influence of this attribute though they do not frequently encounter it, 14% of the students rejected the existence of such problem while expressing their ideas.

The ninth ranked attribute is confirmed by 50% of the respondents. The respondents stated that inability to give responses in a complete sentence is one of their major problems during classroom oral discussions. Still, 34% of the student respondents indicated that they sometimes face this problem during oral interaction. However, 16%, that is to say, eight out of fifty students did not recognize such case as an important determining attribute during discussion.

The tenth impeding attributes rated by a considerable number of respondents is related to mismatch between classroom topics for oral interaction and their local situation needs. As shown in the Table, above, 50%, that is twenty-five out of fifty students accepted this attribute as their most frequently constraining problem during oral classroom discussion. Of the remaining students, 34%, i.e. seventeen out of fifty, students reported the existence of the problem, though they appeared that they did not often confront it during discussion. On the other hand, the table also shows only 18%, i.e. nine out of fifty students rejected the attribute as their oral barrier during classroom oral discussion.

The last impeding attributes rated by 50% of the respondents is shortage of ideas to speak English during classroom discussions. On the other hand, 32% reported that they sometimes confront this problem during classroom oral interaction. Put another way, while twenty-five of the fifty students stated that they often suffer from lack of ideas to partake in classroom oral discussion, thirteen out of the fifty students specified that they face such oral barrier only sometimes during oral discussion. The remaining 24%, that means, twelve students rated that they never face shortage of ideas during classroom verbal interactions.

4.1.2. Results of the interview

Twelve English instructors working at Kotebe University of Education, Faculty of Languages and Humanities were interviewed to express their perceptions about EFL students' oral interactions and participations based on their own practical classroom experience. Accordingly, the following are the frequently reflected impeding attributes intervening students' attempts to interact and participate during classroom discussions. These attributes are listed in accordance with their degree of importance.

1. *Poor background exposure to oral English interaction.*
2. *Lack of confidence to express their opinions orally.*
3. *Reluctance or unwillingness to speak in English in classes.*
4. *Shyness or fear of stages to speak in front of others.*
5. *Frequent shift from English to their mother tongue during classroom verbal interaction*.
6. *Fear of peer comments or criticisms.*
7. *Teachers' lack of commitment to create participatory classroom verbal interaction.*
8. *Fear of making mistakes during speaking in English.*
9. *Influence of language policy at junior and high school levels.*
10. *Frequent interruption of speech due to shortage of words during oral presentations.*
11. *Code shifting or tendency to use their mother tongues during English classes.*
12. *Tendency group themselves according to their L1*.

Overall, the result of the interview shows that of some of the attributes related to the students own problems, inability to give oral responses in long or complete sentences, producing the same phrases (or ideas), which lack the content or message intended to be addressed, and fear of being laughed at are intermittently observed. In addition, results reveal that there found inconsistency between classroom verbal activities and the daily-life communicative needs, and mismatch between topics for discussion and students' prior experiences. Some teachers' difficulty to create conducive classroom environment for oral production practice, and teachers' use of the students' common

language during English classes are also suggested as impeding attributes to generate active classroom verbal interaction.

4.2. Discussion

Based on the data analysis, the first three responses, (i.e. *Due to lack of feedback on my oral work, I do not know how much I have improved my oral performance; I lack enough chances to practice speaking English due to inaccessibility to audio-visuals and language lab, and my English teacher does not give me enough time to practice speaking in class),* are rated by more than 60% of the respondents. The first attribute, for example, is rated by the highest percentage of the respondents – i.e. 66%.

Correspondingly, Gower, et al (1995) has remarked that in a language class, particularly, where the provision of oral feedback prevails, students show better attempts to improve their production skills. However, unless teachers provide progressive and constructive feedbacks that can encourage more oral production attempts, students may be disappointed by the feedback and restrain their involvement. Likewise, Prodromou (1992) has described that providing feedback to students serves the students as a mirror to look at themselves, but only if it is addressed in a way it motivates the students to produce more ideas. It should be noted that unless students get feedback on their work, and feel that they are achieving their learning goal, they may show little apparent efforts to participate and contribute to the classroom interaction.

The attributes four, five and six are reported by more than 55% of the students as their dominant inhibitive attributes during classroom verbal interaction. Attributes five and six-(i.e. *'the way my teacher teaches English does not help me to express my opinions freely and I lack chances to give oral comments or feedbacks on my classmates' oral work as this can extend my oral English practice*') seem that they are interdependent and perhaps, connected to the teacher's pedagogical perspective and/or the perception of the nature of the classroom working behaviours.

Correspondingly, scholars including (Littlewood, 1992; Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Hopokins, 2002, Shumin, 1997) have remarked that whatever pedagogic approach is applied, it is the actual dynamic classroom interaction, the expectations and rate of engagement of the classroom participants that can generate and maximize interactive classroom teaching and learning practices.

A teacher's main objective needs to be creating a positive working classroom condition not only for the purpose of enabling the students to exchange and express their ideas or opinions in an anxiety-

reduced, if not anxiety free environment, but also for the purpose of helping students experience how to cope with and overcome constraints that account to their unproductive interactions in the target language. One way to achieve this goal is to expose students to various participatory teaching strategies that appeal to their interests and varied background experiences. Lesson topics need to have the power to activate students' reactions and engage them in the actual classroom practices.

However, according to Prodromou (1992, p. 49), "Most students ignore most classrooms because most classrooms ignore most students.*"* It would seem highly likely that some teachers fail to value and exploit their students' varied experience as the potential sources of classroom oral interaction. The crux of the matter, as Prodromou argues, is that this oral potential resources 'has been largely ignored by course designers and teachers due to the influence of language teaching theories….'

What is really indispensable is that teachers should be in a better position to make sense of the actual classroom reality. That means, if students become unwilling or reluctant to interact or react, teachers should ask themselves: *How can I initiate participatory oral interaction? Is it important to start from what they know and gradually move to the pedagogic needs? Do students have prior exposure in any way to the point they are asked to discuss? What are the underlying causes of students' apparent lack of motivation to speak? etc*.

In the case of giving feedback and comments, some scholars remark that learners' feedback and comments on their peers' work can generate more hotly interactive classroom discussion (Gower, et al., 1995; Tusi, 1995). Even more to the point, such opportunity can help students not only to learn from their mistakes, but also to initiate genuine communication or negotiation of ideas, (Wood 1990). Through this discussion, students may trace their discussion to their prior knowledge or experience, and exchange ideas or opinions spontaneously.

Prodromou (1992) has a similar, though much more detailed, views of the role of students' feedback or comments during classroom discussions. The more the students engage in exchanging feedbacks or comments, the more they become willing to take risks, test new ideas or experience including new opinions, strategies or styles. Thereby, students may experience how to challenge criticisms or comments of others, and how to be more reasonable or logical to catch others' attention and concern to their opinions. Moreover, the situation may involve them in spontaneous use of language as they mainly concentrate on the idea or meaning they try to get across. Equally important is that a classroom discussion, which uses students' reactions or reflections, could inspire others' feelings and motivation

for more talk and discussion, perhaps, by citing their own academic or social experiences (Richards & Lockhart 1994). For Collins (1986), students often accept feedbacks or comments more willingly and readily from their peers in the natural give and take process than form their teachers. Thus, it would be reasonable to say that encouraging and exposing students to involve in giving and taking constructive comments or feedbacks to each other's' oral work could be more advantageous to extend and generate lively classroom interactions among the students.

Attributes seven and eight are approved by more than 50% of the respondents as major determinant attributes of their oral skills during classroom discussions. If we look into these attributes, that means,(*I feel self-conscious when I speak in English due to fear of making mistakes; and when I want to speak in English I face shortage of words*), in relation to attribute four, (i.e. *I lack confidence to speak English in class*), they would appear that they are interrelated, and one could stimulate the other. Moreover, lack of confidence, self-consciousness, and shortage of words could be linked to students own self-esteem and perception.

In much the same way, a study by Seime Kebede (1988), for example, has pointed out that if students have developed poor perception of their oral ability, they will tend to restrain their speech. That is to say, when students lack confidence in their oral production skills, they are less likely to speak out or express their ideas or feelings in front of others. They usually hesitate or withdraw themselves from conversations or discussions, or perhaps, become passive listeners.

Similarly, if students worry about their language use, or fluency and their position in the eyes of others, and if they pay more attention to form rather than the meaning they intend to communicate, they may be worried about making mistakes rather than about what to say and how to address their ideas effectively. This can put them on the defensive, and so become unwilling or reluctant to express themselves orally, particularly in front of their classmates.

In line with this, Shumin (1997) and Tusi (1995) have indicated that students feel extreme anxiety or become tongue-tied when they either feel worried about their own ability or when they face shortage of words in unexpected situation. This may discourage their attempts to speak more, and enforce them to lose confidence in their speech, and become suddenly silent in the middle of a classroom oral interaction.

Correspondingly, the interview result reflects that some students tend to prefer silence, or be unwilling or reluctant to involve in a group oral discussion. As for as the result of the interview is

concerned, when they are forced to speak, they start speaking, but soon end with fragments of unrelated ideas or shift the target language to their L1 or become silent without convey their ideas or opinions.

A study carried out by Tusi (1995) has shown that a student may fear making mistakes in front of his/her peers; perhaps because he/she becomes a timid person by nature; or perhaps because he/she gets upset or nervous easily, which may lead to a general sense of failure as he/she may not be in a position to control or manage his/her speech. As a result, students may withdraw or restrain themselves from participating in classroom oral interaction.

In this sense, Charles (1989:136) argues that lack of confidence in one's skill or ability can affect not only one's success but also behaviour. Accordingly, to build up students' self-confidence or concept, three things worth due attention: (1) regular personal attention from the teacher; (2) experiencing genuine success: and (3) recognition for that success. Hence, if teachers value every attempts students show to express their opinions or thoughts, and if students feel that they are really enjoying a lesson and showing progress in their performances, and if they are acknowledged for their efforts or changes revealed in their oral performances, students could improve their rate of participation and interaction during discussions.

It would sound that students may lack self-confidence if they think that they may face shortage of words, or they may feel self-conscious; partly because they are not confident in their oral abilities or party because they feel uneasy during discussion in class. Additionally, attributes, four and seven which may be related to the students' knowledge of the subject matter, would likely to have something to do with the students' personal and/or psychological perspectives rather than their English oral proficiency.

Attributes nine, ten and eleven are rated by 50% of the respondents as most frequently impeding causes during classroom discussions. Attribute nine- (i.e. *I lack the skills of giving responses in a complete sentence when my teacher asks me a question*), could be linked to factors four, seven and eight, which, perhaps, emerge from lack of enough knowledge of the language or linguistic competence. The results of the interview also show that a considerable number of students have the problem of expressing their ideas in complete and connected sentence or speech.

Unlike attributes four and seven, attributes eight and nine may not be resulted from an individual's self-concept or competence of verbal abilities. But it seems that such problems are resulted from more of lack of sufficient speaking practice and exposure to knowledge of the language.

However, unlike attributes eight and nine, attributes eleven may be related to personal behaviors. Some individuals are interactive and so show more tendency and willingness to exchange ideas or communicate with others, while some others may show tendency or unwillingness to exchange ideas with others and so, perhaps face shortage of ideas or information during discussions. In other words, unlike individuals with extrovert behaviours, those who reflect introvert behavior may face deficiency of ideas while interaction. Attributes ten appears that it might happen owing to the fact that the topics or activities given in the students' textbook might not be selected and devised in line with the immediate real-life communicative needs of the students, or perhaps, the topics may not enable the students to draw on their prior knowledge or experience, or may not help them to link the messages to the reality existing in their environment.

Consistently, the results of the interview also exemplify that there is a problem connected to topics for discussion due to lack of chains with the students' immediate local situations. Thus, unless the classroom topics reflect the outside situation, students may not be interested and motivated to talk about (Jiang Xia, 1998). More importantly, Xia has underlined that the students potential of oral production could be improved efficiently by providing them with topics which they have had a better acquaintance and exposure in their immediate environment.

This would not mean providing students with topics, which are only related to their local and cultural situations. But rather, exposing students to familiar and reasonable topics, in which students gain a sense of reason and confidence to justify, dialogue or refute the issue under discussion, and which can further promote their interactive skills as well as their focus on communicating thoughts, feelings and experience.

In a nut shell, it seems that there is intermarriage between the results of the questionnaire and interview in spite of some differences in certain cases, and so the results of the study reveal the prevalence of some common impeding attributes that influence the students' speaking abilities during English classroom oral discussions. On the other hand, some scholars and researchers, (example, Bygate, 1987; Harmer, 1991; Hedge, 2000), argue that it is possible to generate active and meaningful classroom oral interactions. To do so, firstly, classroom activities should be plausible enough to

reflect the reality of the actual environment. Secondly, there should be appropriate match and alignment between authentic and pedagogical or contrived classroom learning tasks. Thirdly, we should, first, encourage students to brainstorm and talk about their own related information or experience. Fourthly, we need to encourage students to actively participate, react or comment on others' ideas or opinions most often spontaneously.

Finally, we should inspire students to extend the classroom talk to the outside classroom realities. That means, what teachers and students do in the classroom is just a beginning, but not a beginning to ending of a learning lesson or topic. So, we should extend the classroom oral discussion points to the outside world. Students need to be inspired to take out classroom discussions to their home or outside situation and invited to provide short speech on their outside class discussion every beginning of the next classes.

5. Conclusion

This study has tried to explore and identify the major impeding attributes of classroom oral interaction and their effects on the students' participation in EFL classes. The questionnaire, interview and rating scale results reveal that there are a number of impeding attributes identified as barriers to students' speaking practices during classroom discussions.

The results of the study indicates that there exists interactive interdependence among the personal reality of the students' perceptions, interests, needs, expectations and the social classroom atmosphere and the teacher's personality, philosophy and views of language teaching, academic experience, students' roles, norms of classroom working behaviours, and the external reality of language functions. This implies that successful oral interaction requires the ability to understand teachers and students perspectives of oral interactions and classroom discussions.

It could be concluded that teachers should be aware of that students do have varied classroom oral interaction and participation impeding attributes including background experiences, personal perspectives, interests, expectations as well as teacher, topic and pedagogic related attributes that may create barriers to their oral production practices.

Thus, English language pedagogy needs to involve more of interactive and participatory teaching strategies that empower students to actively participate during classroom discussions: These include: (1) creating suitable condition to entertain students interests and expectations, (2)

establishing good rapport, particularly with those who tend to be reluctant or unwilling to participant in the classroom, (3) linking the daily lesson to students' background knowledge and immediate life experiences, (4) inviting students to summarize or comment during the rounding–up of a lesson, (5) promoting the culture or habit of giving and taking information, especially, constructive comments and feedbacks during discussions, (6) enriching students' English oral proficiency and vocabulary skills by providing digital and/ or language lab supports, and (7) assigning specific roles to each member in a group and facilitating and monitoring the result through consistent follow-up.

Language teaching should be based on the idea of collaborative and learning from differential experience by providing students with the opportunities to exercise their knowledge of the language through oral discussions. Besides, teachers should create conducive classroom condition for the students to reflect their own opinions and understandings of a topic most often in group discussions. They should create anxiety 'free' classroom condition in which students practise giving and taking peer comments and feedbacks. Further, teachers had better promote interactive classroom verbal behaviors that favor more of students' involvement and genuine exchange of ideas and experiences.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following ideas are given as key recommendations:

1. There is a need for language experts, teacher educators, course designers and other concerned bodies and officials to work together in order to assess student's interests, needs and expectations of the nature and patterns of classroom oral discussions.

2. It is suggested that there should be rooms in the English syllabus or textbooks for extra oral practices such as English language speaking days, in which students could participate in playing dramas, presenting news or newsletters, dialogues, short creative plays and/or debates on some current or sensitive issues or topics.

Declaration of competing interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest in this study.

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Review Article

Application of Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education: Systematic Review

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) is an advanced technology that enhances communication pathways across various industries, including education. Current state-of-the-art AI technologies offer significant benefits such as improved efficiency, personalized learning, inclusive learning, adaptive learning, smarter content, and enhanced effectiveness in educational administration. This study employed a qualitative research approach and systematically reviewed the literature to explore the impact of AI on higher education. To ensure a thorough and rigorous analysis, the review adhered to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) criteria and searched databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and IEEE Xplore. The findings indicate that AI positively influences higher education by enhancing instructional methods and administrative processes. Instructors can perform their activities more effectively, ensuring the reliability and quality of their teaching. While the integration of AI in education promotes learning effectiveness, it also addresses potential adverse effects, thereby improving the overall quality of learning. This study contributes to the academic field by providing empirical evidence of AI's benefits in higher education and offering practical recommendations for its implementation.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Higher Education, Learning Effectiveness, PRISMA

1. Introduction

Technologies have the potential to transform the life style in all aspects. The integration of technology like artificial intelligence in higher education indeed has the potential to revolutionize various aspects of academic and administrative processes. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to address some of the biggest challenges in education today, innovate teaching and learning practices, and ultimately accelerate the progress towards SDG 4 (UNESCO, 2021). AI is increasingly being integrated into current higher education systems to enhance the learning

experience for both instructors and students and improve the effectiveness of teaching methods (Crompton & Burke, 2023). Some common applications of AI in education include: personalized learning, adaptive learning, visual assistants, grading and assessment, data analysis and many more (Tan et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2020). Researcher (Gašević et al., 2023) explores into the impact of AI in education on both learners and instructors. It discusses how AI technologies, such as ChatGPT, have sparked public interest and influenced teaching and learning practices.

The review highlights the importance of empowering learners for the age of AI through innovative educational approaches. For instructors, the review emphasizes the need for understanding and trust in AI systems, as well as the development of new theories of learning to enhance teaching effectiveness. It also addresses challenges and opportunities in using AI for assessment, designing AI-driven systems, and incorporating AI applications in classrooms to improve educational outcomes for both learners and instructors. This integration aims to improve the quality of education, increase efficiency, and provide personalized learning experiences for higher education students (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Therefore, by leveraging AI technology, educational institutions can streamline operations, improve decision-making processes, personalize learning experiences, and enhance overall efficiency.

1.1. Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education

Artificial intelligence, the technology that makes it possible for machines to mimic human intelligence to perform tasks that typically require humans, such as learning, reasoning, problem solving, and decision-making, has significant implications for higher education. AI is an expansive field that combines machine learning, algorithm development, and natural language processing, with significant implications for education. Its applications in education have produced prominent advancements in educational tools. These applications encompass personalized learning platforms that enhance students' educational experiences, automated assessment systems that aid teachers and facial recognition systems that provide insights into learners' behaviors. The growing interest in AI within higher education has motivated researchers to explore its utilization in educational contexts. Numerous scholars have conducted subject-specific studies, including (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019; Tan et al., 2022; Han et al., 2023; Agrawal et al., 2021; Butler et al., 2018; Fu, 2019; Chen et al., 2020), which offer valuable insights into the significance of AI and its broader application in higher education.

In their comprehensive systematic review, (Ouyang et al., 2022) focused on the integration of AI in online higher education. They extensively examined literature published from 2011 to 2020. The research findings highlighted key functionalities of AI applications in online higher education, such as performance prediction, resource recommendation, automated assessment, and the enhancement of learning experiences. Another study conducted by (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019) explored the existing research literature on the implementation of artificial intelligence in higher education, with a specific emphasis on educators' perspectives and involvement in adopting and integrating AI technologies. This review analyzed studies investigating how educators engage with AI tools, their perceptions of AI in teaching and learning, the challenges they face, and the support needed to effectively incorporate AI into their teaching practices.

Similarly, the web-based and online education, as enumerated in different studies, has transitioned from simply availing materials online or on the web for students to simply download, study, and do assignments to just pass, to include intelligent and adaptive web-based systems that learn instructor and learner behavior to adjust accordingly, to enrich the educational experience, (Chassignol et al., 2018; Dong, 2022; Peredo et al., 2011). Incorporating Artificial Intelligence technologies in educational industry to enhance learning outcomes, improve administrative processes, and provide personalized experiences for students and faculty members. The industry constantly changing and adapting to new technologies and their educational needs (Li & Wang, 2020). If we consider the technological advancements and educational developments, it emphasizes the importance of implementing AI in education to enhance the overall performance of the learning platform and helps in creating opportunities for more effective and inclusive learning environments.

Several research works have highlighted the different modern advancements in Personalized Learning (Slimi, 2023; Fahd et al., 2021). With the help of AI, teachers may tailor recommendations and feedback to each student's unique learning needs and learning styles by analyzing their learning patterns. This demonstrates how AI can help achieve educational goals like increased student engagement (Xu & Ouyang, 2021; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Through interactive material, adaptive learning platforms, and virtual tutoring systems, AI-powered tools can improve student engagement. Additionally, AI has a great deal of potential to improve administrative activities (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). AI reduces costs and improves operational efficiency by streamlining administrative duties including scheduling, student support services, and admissions

procedures. AI also has a role in predicting student success. In order to increase retention rates and academic success, AI algorithms can forecast student performance, identify at-risk individuals, and offer early interventions.

Moreover, by offering Enhanced Research Capabilities, AI is essential in raising academic achievement. Researchers may examine massive datasets, find trends, and speed up scientific discovery across a range of disciplines with the help of AI tools (Chen et al., 2020; Crompton & Burke, 2023). The use of AI in higher education not only improves student engagement and personalized learning but also expedites administrative work, forecasts student performance, and strengthens research capacities, all of which contribute to a future in education that is more effective and efficient.

1.2. Questions/Objectives

In this study, examining the implementation and relationship between AI tools and academic performance is essential to education because it makes it possible to determine how well these tools enhance teaching and learning processes. Thus, building on earlier systematic reviews that looked at the integration of AI in educational contexts, the objective of this study is to thoroughly review the research findings in the area of AI applications such as:

- What and How AI-enabled applications are being used by Higher education?
- What are the challenges and limitations of integrating AI tools in higher education settings?

2. Methods

This systematic review on the applications of AI in higher education adhered to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines, as recommended by Page et al. (2021), for item selection. To ensure the quality and consistency of reporting, a four-phase flow diagram was employed in this systematic review. PRISMA was selected due to its widespread endorsement and adoption as a guideline for systematic reviews in the field of AI applications in higher education (Page et al., 2021). This section provides an overview of the search strategy, selection criteria (including explanations for inclusion and exclusion), and outlines the methodology for data coding specifically related to the application of AI in higher education.

2.1. Data sources and Search Strategy

To conduct a systematic review of the literature on the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in education, this study adheres to the guidelines outlined in the PRISMA statement. The PRISMA principles, as advocated by Page et al. (2021), are employed to address the three key research questions and to establish a structured framework for conducting a comprehensive systematic literature review. Given the nature of the study and the objective to evaluate the implementation of AI in education, a qualitative research design is adopted, incorporating qualitative content and thematic analysis methodologies. This design is deemed suitable for exploring the diverse approaches and impacts of AI in educational settings.

For the literature search, reputable academic databases such as IEEE Xplore, PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science are utilized due to their credibility and extensive coverage of education research. A set of keywords including “artificial intelligence”, “higher education”, “AI in education”, “AI-based education”, “collaborative learning”, “personalized learning”, “machine learning”, “AI-enhanced learning”, “AI in ethical issues”, “machine learning for student success”, and “student learning” are employed to identify relevant articles that focus on the application of AI in educational contexts. This particular approach ensures a thorough examination of the existing literature on applications of AI in higher education, providing valuable insights into the various strategies and outcomes associated with the integration of AI technologies in educational settings.

2.2. Selection Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion and exclusion criteria played a crucial role in the selection process to identify the most relevant and significant studies for this review. To ensure the timeliness and relevance of the literature, the publication year was restricted to the past 7 years, specifically from January 2016 to February 2024. This timeframe was chosen to capture the latest advancements and developments in the field of artificial intelligence in education.

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Publication year	Paper published after 2016	Paper published before 2016
Source	Peer-reviewed journal papers	Non-peer-reviewed journal papers, editorials, books, Conference proceedings and review articles. Other languages
Language	English Language	Non-education
Context	Higher education	Non-academic, non-Scopus or Web of Science indexed articles
Source type	Academic and Scopus or web of science indexed databases	Application of AI in another sectors (e.g. health…)
Topic	Application of AI in higher education	

In the subsequent phase, emphasis was placed on utilizing reputable academic databases for the literature search. Specifically, the focus was on databases such as IEEE Xplore, Scopus, and Web of Science. By leveraging these databases known for their quality assurance and comprehensive coverage of scholarly works, the study aimed to access a wide array of high-quality research articles related to the application of artificial intelligence in education. This meticulous approach to database selection was intended to enhance the rigor and robustness of the literature review process, ensuring that the studies included would contribute significantly to the overall analysis and findings of the study.

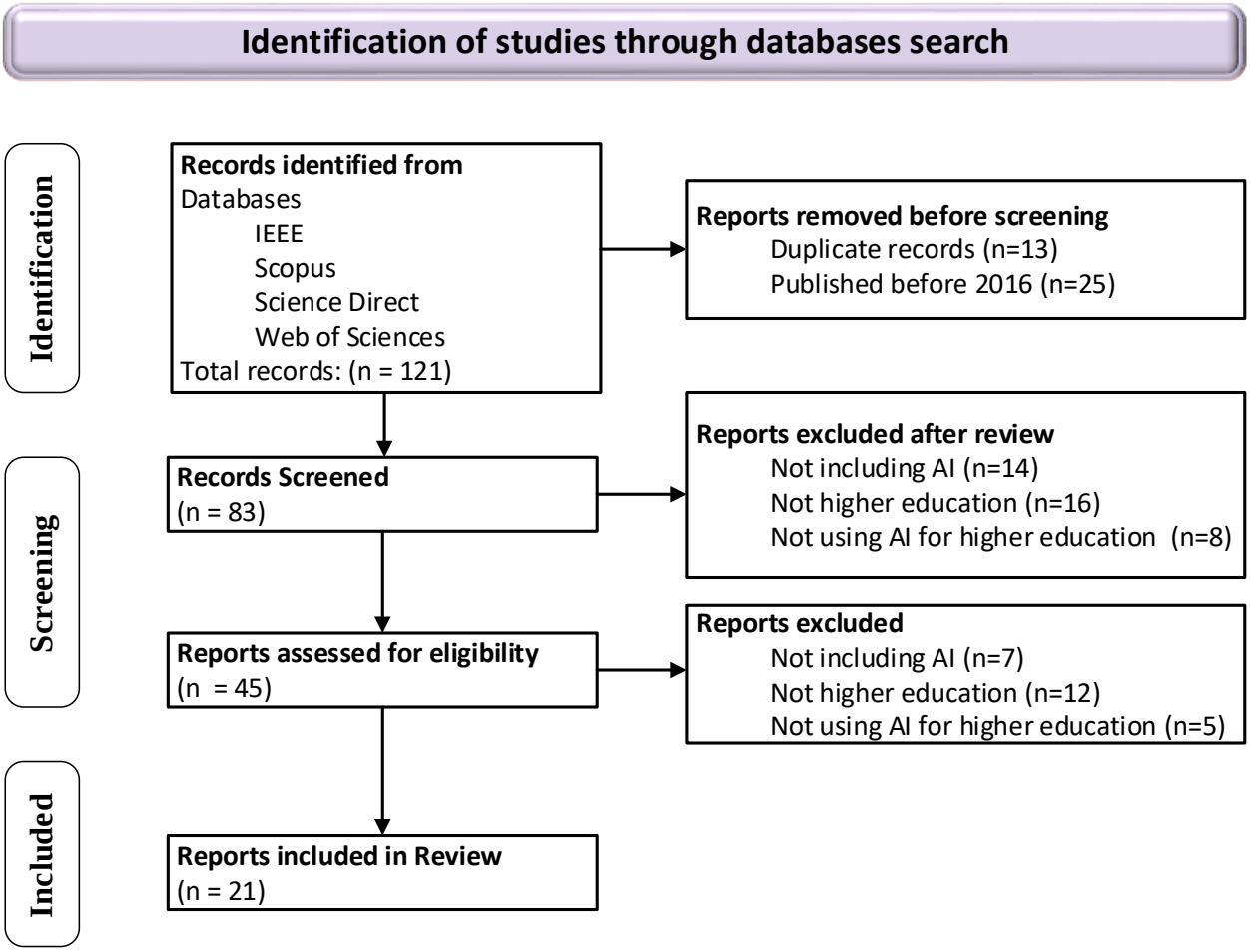

Figure 1. PRISM flow chart of article identification and Screening

In the initial phase of the study, a comprehensive search was conducted, resulting in a total of 121 articles published after 2016. After excluding 25 articles published before 2016 and eliminating 13 duplicates, the initial sample size was refined to 83 articles for further evaluation. The titles and abstracts of these articles were then carefully reviewed during the screening process, leading to the exclusion of articles that were not relevant to AI, higher education, or the use of AI in higher education.

After the initial screening, 45 articles met the initial criteria and proceeded to the next stage of assessment. A more detailed examination against the inclusion criteria was carried out, which resulted in only 21 articles fully meeting the specified criteria for inclusion in the study. Therefore, the final selection of articles reviewed in this study comprised 21 articles that met the established criteria. To provide a visual representation of the search process and selection criteria, a PRISMA

flowchart (Figure 1) was created to illustrate the progression from the initial identification of articles to the final selection of the 21 articles included in the review.

2.3. Applications

An outline of the objective of this study involves assessing the application of AI in higher education. The study intends to evaluate how AI has been implemented in education, specifically focusing on instruction, learning, and administration tasks. As observed by Igbokwe (2023), Willis (2024), and Sharma et al., the utilization of AI in education presents a significant opportunity for a revolutionary transformation of different aspects of the educational landscape. By exploring the uses of AI applications, we can partially uncover the ways in which AI is applied and its impact on education. This section examines and explains, based on the findings from the analyzed articles, the actual implementation and effects of AI on instructional, learning, and administrative tasks. Furthermore, it delves into ethical considerations associated with the implementation of AI in education.

2.3.1. Key Applications of AI

AI plays an important role in revolutionizing teaching learning and administrative processes in higher education. These technologies enable personalized learning experiences like AI-powered platforms, adaptive instructions – to provide learning materials, instructions, and feedback for students, and an automated and real time assessments, can improved student outcomes.

It also supports data analytics for data driven decisions regarding to academic program development; simplifies administrative tasks through AI-enabled systems such as student services, financial processes, and generally it improves operational efficiency; and also it enhances research and innovation by enabling researchers to use AI tools and platforms to analyze complex datasets, to develop predictive models, and automate experiments which leading to new inventions. Moreover, AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants facilitate student support services. Generally, AI applications enable higher educational institutions to deliver high-quality education, raise innovation, and prepare students for success in a digital world that is changing rapidly.

2.3.2. Instructional, Learning, and Ethical Considerations

Instructional, learning, and administrative considerations are key aspects when examining the use of AI applications in higher education. The analysis of various articles highlights the rapid adoption and utilization of AI in different forms by instructors for instructional purposes and as pedagogical tools. The implementation of AI has significantly improved the effectiveness, efficiency, and

quality of instructional work, as evidenced by the reviewed and analyzed publications (Chen et al., 2020; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019; Crompton & Burke, 2023).

Efficiency and quality, within this context, is measured by the delivery of the relevant content in line with the curriculum and in line with the learner specific needs and capabilities, while effectiveness is assessed by the implied uptake and retention or the achievement of learning by the students or the learners. Considering these operational definitions and description of efficiency, quality, and effectiveness, the findings of the study therefore indicate AI has fostered the realization of quality, effectiveness, and efficiency in instruction or teaching (Tan et al., 2022; Xu & Ouyang, 2021).

The implementation of AI applications can have a significant impact on instructional quality. The analysis of relevant studies identified several important themes in which AI has affected the work of instructors. One prominent theme is the use of technology, particularly AI, to foster academic integrity. Tools such as plagiarism checkers and proctoring systems, including platforms like Grammarly, and turnitin, have been highlighted as effective means to ensure academic integrity. Another theme is the leveraging of AI for instructional purposes, which has shown substantial benefits for enhancing instructional quality (Sutton, 2019; Gasparyan et al., 2017; Foltýnek et al., 2019; Sabeeh & Khaled, 2021). This includes the integration of humanoid robots with dialogue and conversational capabilities, creating engaging interactions with learners due to their improved capabilities and human-like appearances.

In addition to instructional benefits, AI applications have also had a notable impact on administrative tasks in higher education. AI technology has been employed to streamline administrative processes, such as student enrollment, registration, and course management. Automated systems powered by AI algorithms can efficiently handle administrative tasks, reducing manual workload and improving accuracy (Igbokwe, 2023; Chen et al., 2020). Moreover, AI-enabled analytics and data processing tools have revolutionized decision-making processes in higher education administration. AI algorithms can analyze large volumes of data to identify patterns, trends, and insights that inform strategic planning, resource allocation, and student support services.

These findings from these studies emphasize that AI applications have facilitated improvements in instructional quality and administrative efficiency in higher education. By leveraging AI

technology, institutions can enhance both teaching and administrative processes, ultimately leading to a more effective and streamlined educational experience for students and educators alike.

3. Results and Discussions

AI technologies encompass a range of tools and applications, including machine learning algorithms, natural language processing, and predictive analytics. In higher education, AI is being used to personalize learning experiences, provide real-time feedback, and support data-driven decision-making. This systematic literature review includes 21 studies based on application of AI in higher education. The analysis guided by the research questions provides some insights into the application of AI.

Research Question 1: What and How AI-enabled applications are being used by Higher education?

AI-enabled applications are revolutionizing higher education by offering innovative solutions to enhance teaching, learning, and administrative processes. One prominent use of AI in higher education is personalized learning, where algorithms analyze student data to provide tailored educational experiences (Tan et al., 2022). Adaptive learning platforms, virtual teaching assistants, personalized learning, Intelligent Tutoring Systems, and smart content recommendation systems are examples of AI applications that provide to individual student needs and preferences. Additionally, predictive analytics tools are being utilized to identify students at risk of academic underperformance, enabling timely interventions to improve student outcomes. Virtual reality simulations, automated grading systems, and smart campus management solutions are other AI applications transforming the higher education landscape.

Our findings show most of the studies indicate that AI has been widely adopted and utilized in education, particularly by educational institutions in various forms. Initially manifesting as computer and related technologies, AI has evolved into web-based and online intelligent education systems. Furthermore, the study notes the integration of embedded computer systems, humanoid robots, and web-based chatbots into educational settings to perform instructional tasks independently or in collaboration with instructors. By leveraging these AI platforms, instructors have empowered themselves and enhance their administrative functions, such as reviewing and grading students' assignments more efficiently. Additionally, AI's machine learning capabilities have facilitated the customization and personalization of curriculum and content to align with

students' needs. This personalized approach has resulted in increased student engagement, retention, and overall improvement in the quality of learning experiences (Gašević et al., 2023).

The integration of AI applications in higher education involves a diverse range of users such as learners, educators, administrators, researchers, parents, and the like; each with specific roles and responsibilities in leveraging AI tools to enhance teaching, learning, and administrative functions in educational institutions. Collaboration among these stakeholders is essential to maximize the benefits of AI technologies and address any challenges or ethical considerations that may arise. Therefore, the integration of AI technologies in education has the potential to transform traditional educational practices, leading to more effective and efficient teaching and learning outcomes.

Research Question 2: What are the challenges and limitations of integrating AI tools in higher education settings?

The integration of AI in decision-making processes within higher education institutions raises important ethical considerations. One key ethical implication is the potential for bias in AI algorithms, which can lead to discriminatory outcomes in areas such as admissions, grading, and student support services. Transparency and accountability are crucial ethical principles that must be upheld when using AI in decision-making, ensuring that the rationale behind AI-generated decisions is clear and justifiable. Moreover, concerns about student privacy, consent, and the impact of automation on the roles of educators in decision-making processes highlight the need for ethical guidelines and frameworks to govern the responsible use of AI in higher education. Institutions must prioritize ethical considerations to safeguard against potential harms and ensure that AI technologies are deployed in a manner that upholds fairness, equity, and integrity in educational decision-making processes.

Despite the potential benefits of AI in higher education, there are several challenges and limitations that institutions need to address. One major challenge is the issue of data privacy and security, as AI systems rely on vast amounts of student data that must be protected from breaches and misuse. Another challenge is the need for faculty training to effectively integrate AI tools into teaching practices and curriculum development. Resistance to change from traditional teaching methods, high initial costs of implementation, and concerns about the reliability and bias of AI algorithms are additional challenges that institutions face when adopting AI technologies (Gašević et al., 2023). Moreover, the lack of interoperability between different AI systems and the difficulty of ensuring

the ethical use of AI tools present further obstacles to successful implementation in higher education settings.

Another key finding of this study is, trustworthiness and reliability of AI technologies will remain an open challenge. (Marcus & Davis, 2019) challenges the notion of quickly achieving human-level intelligence in AI. They highlight the limitations of current AI systems, emphasizing the need to bridge the gap between closed systems and real-world complexities. The authors propose focusing on common sense and deep understanding in AI. Their insights are valuable for higher education, encouraging responsible AI deployment and inspiring institutions to enhance AI programs with a realistic understanding of capabilities and ethical considerations.

Moreover, the integration of AI in the education sector presents both opportunities and challenges. While AI has the potential to enhance teaching and learning experiences, there are specific considerations that need to be addressed (Luckin et al., 2022). Encouraging active participation and recognizing the interconnectedness of education systems are crucial elements in successful AI applications. This study emphasizes that, to effectively integrate AI in education, it is recommended to develop tailored AI training programs for educators and foster collaboration between AI researchers and educators. Ethical considerations should be prioritized, and investments in research and development for AI in education should be made. Ongoing professional development should be provided to educators, fostering a culture of experimentation and evaluation with AI technologies. Engaging policymakers and stakeholders are crucial in shaping AI policies and guidelines for education. By following these recommendations, the education sector can harness the potential of AI while ensuring responsible and effective integration.

4. Conclusion, recommendations, and future work

Based on the results and discussions presented above, it is proofed that AI technologies have the potential to revolutionize higher education by improving teaching, learning, and administrative processes. As of a personalized education, increased student engagement, and administrative effectiveness, the integration of AI applications with the existing system such as personalized learning platforms, analytical tools, and as the whole smart campus management systems has demonstrated encouraging results. However, the integration of AI in higher education also presents challenges and ethical considerations that need to be addressed.

The potential for bias in AI algorithms, data privacy and security concerns, faculty training, interoperability issues, and the need for ethical guidelines are among the challenges that institutions must navigate. Trustworthiness and reliability of AI technologies remain open challenges, highlighting the importance of realistic expectations and responsible deployment.

To effectively integrate AI in education, the researcher of this study recommends the following actions:

- Develop tailored AI training programs for educators: Institutions should provide professional development opportunities to educators to enhance their understanding and skills in utilizing AI tools effectively in teaching practices and curriculum development.
- Create collaboration between AI researchers and educators: Encouraging partnerships and collaboration between AI researchers and educators can facilitate the development and implementation of AI solutions that address specific educational needs and challenges.
- Prioritize ethical considerations: Institutions must establish clear ethical guidelines and frameworks to ensure the responsible use of AI in decision-making processes. Transparency, fairness, equity, and integrity should be upheld, addressing concerns such as bias, privacy, consent, and the impact of automation on the roles of educators.
- Invest in research and development for AI in education: Continued investment in research and development is necessary to advance AI technologies specifically tailored for educational contexts. This includes addressing the limitations of current AI systems and focusing on areas such as common sense and deep understanding.
- Foster a culture of experimentation and evaluation: Institutions should promote a culture that encourages educators to experiment with AI technologies and evaluate their effectiveness. Ongoing professional development should support educators in adopting and adapting AI tools to their teaching practices.

In addition to these recommendations, future work in the field should focus on leveraging novel pedagogical approaches such as adaptive learning environments and intelligent tutoring systems, as well as exploring the development of lifelong learning platforms, cutting-edge research initiatives, and the integration of AI-assisted curriculum design and assessment tools. By incorporating these advancements, educators can pave the way for a more personalized, inclusive, and effective learning experience for learners of all ages.

Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest

This paper is free of conflict of interest.

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Original Article

Translanguaging Practices in Kotebe University of Education Classrooms and their Implications for Pedagogy

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Abstract

Ethiopia uses English as a medium of instruction for every subject, except for national language subjects, at tertiary level education. This policy is also applied at Kotebe University of Education (henceforth KUE). The education of bilingual and multilingual speakers is facing several challenges due to the medium of instruction. One of the problems is the prevalence of monolingual instructional approach whereby instructions are carried out exclusively in English, and the place given to L1 use in any circumstances is less. This project attempts to explore the practice of translanguaging (multilinguals' tendency to switch between languages) among students and teachers in KUE classes. By employing a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, data about the nature, types and functions of local language use in classrooms were gathered. Combinations of quantitative and qualitative methods were implemented to analyze the data. The results indicated that local languages were used in classrooms for various purposes by students and teachers. Most of the students had positive attitudes towards the use of local languages. Teachers also confirmed that they used code-switching, code-mixing, and translation, in classrooms to meet their students' communication needs.

Key words: local languages, translanguaging, code-switching, translation, attitudes

1. Introduction

The way people perceive the entity 'language' has changed over time after the outlook of early linguists, like Ferdinand De Sassure, and Noam Chomsky. Both of these linguists posited that language is free from its users and its context (Garcia & Wei 2014:7). Linguists have made progress in their assumption of language and its context through time as the social world of language gets complicated with other factors, such as migration, technology, trade, etc. With these experiences

prevailing in speakers, it has been acknowledged that language is not free of context of use. It exists within the context of language use and should be dealt with as such. As Garcia and Wei (2014:9) put it, "With the rise of post-structuralism in the post-modern era, language has begun to be conceptualized as a series of social practices and actions by speakers that are embedded in a web of social and cognitive relations." Among these recently acknowledged social practices and actions is translanguaging or using L1 in L2 medium of communication.

Translanguaging, a phenomenon related with multilingual speakers, means swinging between languages during communication. It is the flexibility of speakers to choose among the languages they speak to meet their communicative needs (Garcia &Wei 2014:8).The rise of multilingualism has drawn the attention of language researchers and instructors to various phenomena that have been observed in multilingual speakers, who develop knowledge on how and when to use their languages depending on, for instance, the interlocutors involved in the conversation, the topic of the conversation, and the social context (Reyes, 2004).The tendency of multilingual students, to choose between their repertoires in language use has also attracted the attention of language researchers.

At earlier times, there was an overwhelming assumption that considers both translanguaging and code-switching as signs of students' and teachers' inefficiencies in the target languages of classrooms. However, as Beres (2015:107) notes the positive use of translanguaging in Wels with teaching in two languages namely Welsh and English as, "Through the systematic use of both languages in the same lesson, translanguaging enables students to internalize new knowledge, process it and then makes sense of it in the other language."

The pedagogical functions of translanguaging have been acknowledged by others like Crees & Blackledge (2015: 26) who write, "In the classroom, translanguaging approaches draw on all the linguistic resources of the learner to maximize understanding and achievement. Thus, both or all languages are used in a dynamic and functionally integrated manner to organize and mediate understanding, speaking, literacy and learning." Though translanguaging has emerged as a pedagogical theory, in recent years, researchers also contended that it is not only a classroom practice, it is also a language practice of individuals trying to meet their complex communicative needs (Garcia & Wei 2014:126). This study is thus set out to explore the ways in which students

and teachers communicate in a classroom where only one language (English) is ascribed as a medium of instruction, by taking KUE as a case in focus.

Ethiopia is a multilingual, multiethnic and culturally pluralistic country. According to *Ethnologue* (Lewis 2009), there are eighty-five living languages spoken, divided among four different language families: the Semitic, Cushitic and Omotic families of the Afro-asiatic phylum and those belonging to the Nilo-saharan phyla. Amharic is used as a lingua franca in Ethiopia and this practice is encouraged by a range of opportunities, including its function as a working language of the federal government, trade, urbanization, labor migration, displacement, education and literacy and most importantly by intermarriages. Though regional languages have been introduced for wider communications, Amharic continues to spread, both as a first language and as a second language (Cohen, 2006: 171).

As to Berhanu (2009), the current education policy, which has been in place since 1994, accords high practical status to the mother tongue as medium of instruction, particularly at the primary level, with transition to English at grades 5, 7, or 9 depending upon the region; and the learning of Amharic as a subject by speakers of languages other than Amharic. The policy for most students, therefore, is trilingual (multilingual) based on the mother tongue, Amharic and English. From grade nine onwards English is the sole official medium of instruction in Ethiopia (cf. Ministry of Education, Education and Training Policy, 1994, revised in 2023).

While multilingualism can be observed in different settings, it has more obvious social consequences in educational contexts (García & Lewi 2014). Language instruction currently faces several challenges in the education of bilinguals and multilinguals. That is, the use of the monolingual speaker of English as the model of proficiency (something which English language learners should strive to meet) is one of the predominant concerns. More specifically, in English as a Foreign Language programs (EFL) teachers and students work under the belief that an L2-only classroom policy maximizes language learning opportunities (Skutnabb-Kangas 2009). However, Inbar-Lourie (2010:351-367) notes that language teaching pedagogy has tended to ignore or even suppress bilingual or multilingual options endorsing a predominantly monolingual policy, one which equates ‘good teaching’ with exclusive or nearly exclusive target language use.

This study explores the views as well as the linguistic behaviors of students and instructors about the use of local languages in English only medium of instruction classrooms where the majority of the students are bi/multilinguals. Its objectives are to- identify the linguistic strategies that instructors employ to present content and /or form in classroom, investigate students' and teachers' practices and the associated functions of L1 use, assess the views of students and teachers about the use of L1 in classrooms). We believe that the findings of the study contribute to reconsider the current teaching learning of both English and content subjects. It will also add to our knowledge of the theories of second language acquisition/learning.

2. Methodology

2.1. Sampling design, sample size and methods

Informants of this study were both students and instructors who were learning and teaching respectively at KUE in 2017/18 academic year. Using random sampling technique, 150 second year students of the six colleges were selected to fill in a survey questionnaire. The colleges include Natural & Computational Sciences, Social Sciences, Languages & Humanities, Teacher Education, Urban Development as well as Business and Economics.

Besides, using convenience sampling (Dörnyei, 2007), 10 instructors were selected for a semi-structured interview, for they possess some key characteristics that are pertinent to the purpose of the investigation. The selected instructors taught English and content subjects in different disciplines. Their experiences in teaching at university level ranged from 3 to 32 years whereby the average being 12.1 years. While two of the instructors had PhDs, the rest (eight instructors) were MA holders in different disciplines. All of the participants were promised anonymity and the interview which took 20-30 minutes for an instructor was conducted in English (see Appendix B for the interview questions).

2.2. Methods of data analysis

A combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches was employed to analyze the data gathered through interview and a questionnaire. The data gathered through the questionnaire were analyzed with SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The data were reported using descriptive statistics.

The transcripts of the interviews were first cleaned up before the data analysis began. This initial stage cleaned-up the transcripts for any dross, material that occurred in transcripts which did not directly relate to the topic or repetitious or peripheral. Then, the data were categorized into meaning units based on the specific codes and the recurring themes in the transcripts, which later were used as units of analysis. Thereafter, a thematic analysis procedure was operated on the processed data. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke 2006: 6). This approach offers a systematic method of grouping textual data by breaking the text down into meaningful units, developing a category system and grouping together ideas of a similar sort. The themes were identified at two levels: semantic and latent. In addition to describing what is in the texts (semantic level), the analysis goes beyond the semantic content of the data and examines the underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualizations—and ideologies—that shape and inform the semantic content of the data (latent level). Moreover, the data were approached in an inductive or 'bottom-up' way, that is, the majority of the themes identified were strongly linked to the data though there were some influences from the theoretical and epistemological commitments (Braun & Clarke 2006: 12).

3. Results and discussion

This section of the paper presents the data collected through a questionnaire from students and from interviews with teachers. The results of the questionnaire are compiled in tables followed by analysis and interpretation of the descriptive data. The interview data from teachers are discussed separately from that of the data from students. The section contains contents that relate to respondents' background, their ideas about mother tongue use in classrooms and frequency of mother tongue use by teachers as reported by students. It also provides the data from the sampled instructors and the discussions.

3.1. Respondents' background

Background of the respondents to the questionnaire is shown in the coming three tables.

Table 1: Sex of respondents

Sex	**no.**	%
Female	69	46
Male	81	54
Total	150	100

As can be noted from Table 1, 69 (46%) female and 81 (54%) male students filled in the questionnaire. The data indicate that both female and male students were nearly equally represented in the research.

Table 2: Respondents' mother tongue

	Amharic	Oromo	Tigrigna	Wolaita	Hadiya	Gedo	Sidama	Gurage	Kembata	Basketo	Total
no.	68	46	13	9	4	1	3	4	1	1	150
%	45.4	30.7	8.7	6	2.7	.7	2	2.7	.7	.7	100

Table 2 shows that student respondents had different linguistic backgrounds. The majority were Amharic (68 or 46%) and Oromo (46 or 30.7%) language speakers. There were also Tigrigna (13 or 8.7%), Wolaita (9 or 6%), Hadiya (4 or 2.7%), Gurage (4 or 2.7%) and Sidama (3 or 2%) mother tongue speakers. Gedo, Kembata and Basketo were also each spoken by one respondent as mother tongues. Generally, it can be said that multilingual speakers were involved in the questionnaire. Inclusion of respondents from different linguistic background will give the opportunity to get diversified ideas and attitudes towards use of mother tongues in classrooms.

3.2. Students' ideas towards the use of mother tongues in classrooms

Student respondents were asked to give their opinion about the use of local languages in the classrooms. Their responses are compiled in the coming table.

Table 3: Students' ideas on the use of mother tongues for different functions in the classrooms

Mother tongues can be used in classroom to:		SA[1]	A	U	D	SD	total
explain difficult concepts	no.	25	62	11	31	21	150
	%	16.7	41.3	7.3	20.7	14	100
understand and describe new vocabulary	no.	38	68	3	32	9	150
	%	25.3	45.3	2	21.3	6	100
Facilitate group works	no.	35	70	5	27	13	150
	%	23.3	46.7	3.3	18	8.7	100

As can be noted in from Table 3, many students (16.7% strongly agree, 41.3% agree) believed that local languages other than English could be used to explain some concepts which might appear difficult to the learners in the classroom. To this, 20.7% disagreed and 14% strongly disagreed. What can be said from the data is that though the majority supported the use of local languages to explain difficult concepts, still more than a quarter of them did not like the idea of mixing local

[1]SA= Strongly agree, A= Agree, U= Undecided, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly disagree

languages to classroom language use. The reason for these groups of students to stand against use of local languages in English as a medium of instruction classrooms could be their tendency to have different linguistic backgrounds. A mother tongue to one student many not be the same for the other.

The majority of the respondents (25.3% strongly agree, 45.3%) considered that local languages can be used to illustrate new vocabulary or to learn them. A quarter of them (21.3% disagree, 6% strongly disagree) disagreed that mother tongues should be used to learn new vocabulary. The rest, 8.7% could not decide.

The other concept that students were asked in the questionnaire was whether local languages should be used during group works. It was the majorities' consent (23.3% strongly agree, 46.7% agree) that local languages should be used to facilitate group activities. Some of them (18.7% disagree, 8% strongly disagree) did not support that mother tongues should be used during group works. We can understand from the data that most of the students wanted to have the chance to use mother tongues to facilitate group activities in the classrooms. Respondents were also asked to indicate for what purposes they shifted from English to local languages in the classrooms. The results are presented in the following table.

Table 4: Areas mother tongues were used by students themselves

I use mother tongue to:		SA	A	U	D	SD	total
Draft assignments and translate it into English	No.	43	51	6	32	18	150
	%	28.7	34	4	21	12	100
Interpret English lectures into mother tongue	No.	43	53	7	26	21	150
	%	28.7	35.3	4.7	17.3	14	100
take lecture notes	No.	48	46	8	29	19	150
	%	32	30.7	5.3	19.3	12.7	100
share problems with teachers	No.	48	65	3	18	16	150
	%	32	43.3	2	12	10/7	100

Student respondents stated some activities which they preferred mother tongues over English to communicate in the classroom. More than half of them (28.7% strongly agree, 34% agree) said that they used mother tongue to prepare their assignments. Again more than a quarter of them (21%disagree, 12% strongly disagree) did not like the idea of preparing assignments in mother tongue and translating them into English. Given the fact that reading materials are presented in

foreign languages or English in the University's libraries, the tendency to use mother tongues to do assignments of any subject of study might not be fulfilled.

The respondents also reported that they (28.7% strongly agree, 35.3% agree) interpreted lectures into their own language. That means they tried to find equivalents of English terms in their own language when they followed up lectures. Some of them did not look for mother tongue equivalents of terms they listen in English lectures. With regard to learning in English, it is a known fact that translation of ideas into mother tongue is one of the strategies of students' learning. Therefore, students of KUE also exploited this technique in their endeavor to better understand English lectures.

The other area students applied mother tongue was taking lecture notes. To this, 32.7% and 30% put that they jotted down lectures in their mother tongue. We can assume two occasions that may lead students to take notes in their mother tongue. On the one hand, their tendency to interpret lectures into mother tongue (as reported in the above item) might enable them to put ideas in it. On the other hand, supposedly, teachers used mother tongues in classrooms and so students recorded the lectures explained in it.

Students also pointed out that they used local languages to share their issues to their teachers. With regards to this, the majority (32% strongly agree, 43.3% agree) indicated that they used mother tongues or other Ethiopian languages to speak their problems to their teachers. Very few of them (12 % disagree, 7% strongly disagree), did not agree with the idea of using local languages to talk to their teachers. Based on our experience, we can say that students feel very relaxed when using local languages than English with their teachers, especially outside classrooms. In the classrooms they mostly try to use English even to talk personal issues since they might consider classrooms to be formal settings and the medium of instruction should be used. According to Escobar and Dillard-Paltrineri (2015), multilingual students apply both languages in or outside classrooms. But at times when they know they are expected to demonstrate second language use, they may strive to meet that expectation especially in the classrooms.

The data generally show that local languages were used in classrooms to carry out different activities. This implies that students as bilingual speakers of English and their own mother tongue used both languages to benefit most out of their lessons.

3.3. Students' views towards use of local languages in classrooms

The other issue that the research tried to investigate was students' views towards the use of local languages in the classrooms. Their responses are compiled in the next table followed by a discussion.

Table 5: Views towards use of mother tongues in classrooms

Please express your views towards local languages use		SA	A	U	D	SD	total
I feel confident	No.	45	66	4	28	7	150
	%	30	44	2.7	18.7	4.7	100
I want teachers to use local languages to praise me	No.	46	66	10	16	12	150
	%	30.7	44	6.7	10.7	10	100
I understand teachers' questions in mother tongue	No.	45	63	11	13	18	150
	%	30	42	7.3	8.7	12	100
I understand explanations in mother tongue better	No.	49	55	9	22	15	150
	%	32.7	36.7	6	14.7	10	100

As can be seen from Table 5, the majority of the students agreed (30% strongly agree, 44% agree) that they felt confident when they used mother tongues in the classrooms. Few students (18.7% strongly disagree, 4.7% disagree) with the idea that use of mother tongue gave confidence. Many linguists agree that linguistic freedom and psychological freedom are related. In other ways, speakers have more mental freedom and confidence when they use the language they now better than otherwise (Orman, 2008). It is therefore acceptable that use of mother tongue boosts students' confidence.

The student respondents (30.7% strongly agree, 44% agree) also mentioned that they were happy when teachers used mother tongues to praise them. Some of them (10.7% disagree, 10% disagree) did not agree that the use of mother tongues to praise them was pleasant. Though we know from our everyday teaching experience that teachers mostly used English than mother tongues to praise their students' performance, use of local languages for the same purpose was also welcomed from the students' side.

Use of mother tongues to ask classroom oral questions was also rated positively by the respondents. The majority of them (30% strongly agree, 42% agree) considered that teachers' questions addressed in mother tongues were easy to understand. Few of them (8% disagree, 12% strongly disagree) disagreed that classroom questions were more understandable in mother tongue than in English.

Teachers' explanations delivered in mother tongues were also seen to be easily understandable. To this item, most of the respondents (32.7% strongly agree, 36.7% agree) agreed that classroom explanations provided in mother tongues were simple to recognize. Nearly a quarter of them (10 % disagree, 14% strongly disagree) did not agree that use of mother tongues had positive impact on understanding classroom explanations. It is a clear fact that topics discussed in local languages are simpler to comprehend than ones in English. Garcia (2009) also acknowledges that mother tongue use gives students the opportunity to understand lessons better.

All in all, the data in the table indicate that the majority of the students had positive view towards the use of mother tongues in the classroom. They considered use of mother tongues to be helpful for their academic success alongside medium of instructions in University classes.

3.4. Analysis of teachers' interviews

This section of the research deals with what the teachers in KUE perceived about the use of learners' primary languages in classrooms for teaching both content and language (English) courses. It also assesses their perceived linguistic practices in classrooms where education is supposed to be mediated only through English. Based on the analysis of the transcripts, a range of broad categories along with some specific themes have been identified. What follows is a discussion of these themes using relevant examples from the excerpts.

3.5. Using learners' L1 in classroom

Though use of learners' L1 in a foreign language classroom is a debatable issue among language scholars, the overwhelming majority of the participants confirmed that they used learners' L1 in classrooms to teach both content and language (English) courses. The respondents, however, differed in terms of the purpose and the extent to which they allowed the involvement of learners' primary languages in classrooms. The major reason for the inclusion of learners' L1 in classes was the need to remedy miscomprehension. In order to deal with learners' misunderstanding, instructors reported the use of a range of strategies that involved the students' L1. These included translating and code-switching for the purposes of exemplifying as well as summarizing difficult concepts and forms, among others.

3.5.1. To remedy miscomprehension

Miscomprehension may occur due to different factors such as complexity of the topic, the instructor's way of presentation, having low proficiency level in MoI, and so on. Proficiency in the language of instruction can affect comprehension of content and hence the performance of students in various subjects. In such times, instructors usually use a wide ranging mechanism to effectively deal with this problem. As many of the respondents reported, they used learners' L1 when the students failed to comprehend an issue being discussed in the classroom. The instructors employed the following specific techniques or mechanisms to deal with students' problems of comprehension.

3.5.2. A combination of mother tongue and other methods

Some participants said that they made use of a variety of pedagogical tools to clarify topics and to avoid a comprehension problem from the part of the learners. These included presenting the subject matter in simpler language, retelling the main points, providing additional examples, scaffolding, etc. In the following excerpt, using mother tongue is considered as part of the pedagogical strategies that respondent (P01) used to remedy misunderstanding in the class.

> 1st I try to explain it [the issue] in simple statements. 2nd I use teaching aids if the topic allows me to do. So 3rd, I try to briefly explain with vernacular languages. 4th I let them to read different materials from library. 5th I use different examples/much related with the topic

The excerpt shows that participant (P01) had the experience of briefly explaining the subject matter using languages commonly used by the learners when they become unsuccessful in their effort to understand it. Though there was a utilization of learners' primary languages, the use was limited (only for a specific purpose), to providing a brief explanation about the topic.

Similarly, two respondents conceded that they used Amharic and a simplified version of their English when there was a need to ensure comprehension. Participant (P03) in particular reported, "When I found out that my students do not understand the content I teach… (1) I try to explain in simple English, (2) I use Amharic for difficult words, phrases, ideas." This indicates that when a simplified version of the instructor's English fails to fix the learners' misunderstanding, a local language (Amharic) is used for that purpose. This was achieved, especially by using Amharic equivalents for the difficult English terminologies and associated concepts.

3.5.3. Employing code-switching

Code-switching is a systematic alternative use of two languages or language varieties within a single conversation or utterance and a main feature of bilinguals' speech (Li 2000). Here, the term code refers to either a certain dialect like the dialects of Amharic or English, or to a certain language, such as Amharic or English (Zelalem 1998). Code-switching is extensively used in classrooms for various functions, such as to fix comprehension problems, to get feedback from learners, etc.

When asked about the strategy used when learners misunderstood content or form, respondent (P09) said, "I would be forced to use code-switching." In the demographic data, participant (P09) declared to be a bilingual in Amharic and English. Hence, when the students fail to understand his English, this instructor immediately switches to Amharic and then back to English. That means, English is regularly used to deliver a lecture on a certain topic (or issue) and when the learners do not understand it, the instructor is forced to use Amharic. By using Amharic, this respondent (P09) clarifies unclear points or issues in the process of learning-teaching English.

3.5.4. To summarize a lecture

One instructor reported that he used Amharic in classroom, but as a last resort to help learners understand the subject matter. Specifically, in the words of this participant (P03), "As far as I can [,] I use English as a medium of instruction using simple words/phrases/sentences. Sometimes, when I found my students did not understand the content I use Amharic as a way of summarizing the lesson." Again, learners' L1s are not the primary options to deal with the problem of understanding in the classroom. As it is shown in the excerpt above, Amharic is introduced to the class discussion only after the other options (paraphrasing, simplifying, etc) have been exhaustively used. Thereafter, as a last resort, Amharic (a local language) is used to give the summary of the discussion made entirely in English. Basically, a summary of a lecture contains only essential ideas and important details, leaving irrelevant points out. In so doing, a summary provides learners with the areas that are worth noting and remembering and thus it serves as an important pedagogical tool to facilitate and to improve learning. This is done, as it has been outlined above by using a local language, Amharic.

3.5.5. To get feedback from students

Another purpose of resorting to learners' L1in English class is to obtain feedback from students on lessons, activities or instructions. According to respondent (P10), a local language is used in the classroom to identify learners' problems during class discussions. The following excerpt shows the procedures this instructor follows to identify the learners' problems and takes solution in class.

> *When I found out that my students do not understand the content I teach, I first identify the reason why they do not understand the content. I would ask individual students to tell me what they think is the reason not to understand the content. In doing so, I use the local language (P10).*

The excerpt presented above indicates that a local language is employed as a tool in learning-teaching process. That is, it is used in the process of getting feedback as to what the cause(s) of the learners' failure in understanding the message or what went wrong in the presentation of content. This procedure is significant because the instructor cannot remedy the problem if he/she does not know the factors that caused it. Again, a local language served as an important tool to extract this significant piece of information from the learners.

Both the language policy and the methodology of teaching oblige the instructors to use English only in the classroom. However, they employed an array of strategies (mainly code-switching and translation) that incorporate local languages in the classroom discussions. Code-switching and translation are processes that show bilingual students perform bilingually in meaning-making, cognitive engagement, creativity and criticality (García & Wei, 2014). Though code-switching is rarely endorsed institutionally or pedagogically underpinned, when it is used, it becomes a pragmatic response to the local classroom context (Creese & Blackledge, 2010), and it was found out that code-switching between L1 and L2 by both teachers and learners in the second language classrooms could facilitate the process of second language learning (Nichols & Colon, 2000). Code switching techniques, for instance, can be an extremely useful way of employing the students' L1 to emphasize important concepts in the classroom (Cook, 2001).

On the other hand, a couple of instructors argued that L1 should not be used in any form in the classroom where English is the medium of education. They think that maximum exposure has to be given to the L2 (English), and using L1 is considered as detracting from learning English.

Therefore, these instructors do not use learners' L1; they rather employ strategies pertinent to the English language to deal with problems associated with comprehension as shown below.

3.6. Rephrasing and using apt examples (English)

To deal with the learners' miscomprehension, strategies abound to L2 such as rephrasing, exemplification, etc. were used instead of learners' L1. Consider this excerpt which emphasizes an exclusive use of English: "When I feel like my students are not clear with my instructions, I usually rephrase things and approach them the way they can easily understand. Besides, I try to support my point of discussion with examples." (P07). Here, there is no room to accommodate the learners' mother tongues in the classroom, and this practice seems to be based on the assumption that language has to be taught better without reference to L1, which is believed to lead to errors (interference errors). Besides, teaching entirely through the TL makes the language real. Escobar and Dillard-Paltrineri (2015), however, maintained that the belief that using learners' L1sis the result of semi-bilingualism and has led students to believe that such use is detrimental to their learning of L2; it has also led teachers to realize restrictive L2-only policies which detract learners from using L1.

3.7. Views on the English-only language policy

In Ethiopian Higher Institutions (EHIs), English serves as the sole medium of instruction. Regarding to the use of language(s) for medium of instruction in effective university classes, the majority of the participants endorsed the English-only language policy as a viable medium of instruction in EHIs. Participants also considered the English language as an effective means of ensuring learning at a higher level. They, however, claimed that certain problems pertinent to learners' proficiency and the difficulty nature of some contents forced them to use local languages for classes that have to be exclusively conducted in English. What follows is a presentation of some of the contexts, which according to the respondents, require or demand the involvement of the learners' primary languages in an English-only medium of instruction.

3.8. Certain contents better understood in L1

Participant (P03) in the quote given below stressed that local languages have to be used to provide examples to support learners understand the content discussed in the classroom. Such an intervention (exemplification through local languages) is employed to make some contents

comprehensible to the students. The underlying reason seems to be that some contents are unintelligible for the students.

> *It should be an obligation to use English only [as a medium of instruction] as there are times that students will face very difficult time to understand some contents in English. In such a case the teacher need to use some examples in local language Amharic and lead some other students to think some examples in their own language. But conducting classes in both English and other local languages seems not to be effective (P03).*

This belief is based on Vygotsky's most important claim, that is, language is not only a communication device but also a powerful tool that mediates cognition (Vygotsky 1981). When learners engage in complex and cognitively demanding L2 tasks or issues, L1 helps them to better understand and leads to improved learning. In helping the learners contextualize the content and hence comprehend it, the participant does not show preference only for Amharic, but also encouraged other students to apply their own respective languages for similar cases and purposes. In their study, Swain and Lapkin (2000) pointed out that L1 can be an important cognitive tool in carrying out tasks that are both linguistically and cognitively complex.

3.8.1. To discuss an account of local events

Using learners' L1s can be beneficial, especially in expressing local issues. One prominent case reported is the use of idiomatic expressions in learners' L1 to make clear local events. The quote presented below illustrates this purpose:

> *…if for example I am teaching modern Ethiopian history about "the reign of Queen Zewditu" and the controversy about her death, I prefer to tell them some Amharic versions like*
> *"ድሮም አዴ ሚኒልክ ድመት ነበር ጠላታቸው ንግስት ዘውዲቱንም አነር ገደላቸው" for the Amharic speakers it is very easy to understand the causes of the death of the queen (P01).*

This excerpt is particularly interesting as it exemplifies the importance of using local languages in expressing an account of a local story. While teaching about the death of the then queen Zewditu, the instructor employed an idiomatic expression in Amharic that signals the cause of her death and/or possibly who might be the queen's killer. The idiomatic expression goes like this:

dɨromm	*as'e*	*menelik*	*dɨmmət*	*nəbbər*	*t'ələtaččəw*
formerly	emperor	Menelik	cat	was	his enemy

nɨgɨst	*zewditu-n-mm*	*anər*	*gəddəlaччəw*
empress	and of Zewditu	panther	killed her

'It was a cat that was the enemy of emperor Menelik II, and hence a panther killed empress Zewditu.'

This idiomatic expression implicitly relates the death of queen Zewditu with the enemy of her father, Menelik II (who died earlier). It specifically connects the causes of her death by ascribing *dɨmmət* 'cat' as the enemy of Menelik II and thus speculating that, it is *anər* 'a panther' that killed queen Zewditu, Menelik II's daughter. That is, as *dɨmmət* 'cat' and *anər* 'a panther' belong to the same family (called cat family), the killer of empress Zewditu was a descendant of her father's enemy. Such aspects of learning could be enhanced by use of the L1 such as Amharic. The ability to capitalize such linguistic skills and knowledge already accumulated via the mother tongue is among habits of good language learners (Butzkamm 2000).

3.8.2. Proficiency gap in learners

Learners' level of proficiency in English has also influenced instructors to resort to local languages. Some respondents advocate the use of English as a MoI, but they think that the learners' proficiency in English is so low that it is impossible to fully realize it in the classroom for teaching-learning. Participant (P05), for instance, admitted that the use of learners' mother languages in classroom is the corollary of the low proficiency level of the students' English. This participant also asserted that: "As to me since the medium of instruction is English, teachers should lecture by using English but the level of students' English is low, we teachers will be forced to translate into their local language". Here, translation is used as a tool held by teachers to bridge the students English proficiency gap in classes that are supposed to be conducted exclusively in English. The learners' level of comprehension of the language of instruction can negatively affect performance because students may experience difficulties in grasping the underlying basic concepts that are taught in various subjects (Nyika 2015).

3.9. Students' use of local languages in classroom

All of the lecturers interviewed reported that students make use of local languages in classroom though the language policy stipulates English is the only MoI. The learners use their local languages

in certain contexts for certain purposes. The following are the contexts and associated functions in which learners use their L1 in classrooms, as reported by the participants.

i. When they want to ask and answer questions
ii. When they need clarifications or explanations
iii. When they try to express complex ideas
iv. When they discuss with their peers

With regard to this, participant (P04) stressed that lecturers cannot fully apply the English-only language policy in the classroom, for the learners are not a full-fledged user of the English language. Hence, we should continue using the learners' primary languages for certain functions (asking questions and providing explanations) until they become fluent enough in English. Here, it should be considered that asking questions and requesting for clarification are important components of cognition, and the students depend on local languages to achieve these goals.

The use of learners' L1 is not restricted to content subjects only. In English classes too, students use local languages. Again, local languages are used in this context when the learners need to understand things. This includes when they want to work on assignments and when they want to get explanation about instructions from the teacher. As to participant (P10), "They [students] prefer to use local languages when they have a need to understand things. For example, they use local languages when they are given assignments. They also like their teacher to use a local language when he/she gives instructions."

3.10. Combining languages in and outside classroom

With regard to the relevance and appropriateness of combining languages in and outside classrooms, the respondents demonstrated two views: combining languages outside a classroom is acceptable but it is inappropriate in a class.

3.10.1. L1 should not be combined with L2 in class

Generally, there seems to be an agreement among the majority of the interviewed lecturers that English only has to be used in classroom, but outside the classroom it is possible to combine languages. This might have emanated from the belief that the communication that takes place in classroom is different from the one that happens outside the classroom. On this basis, they described academic language (communication) for the former and social or interactional for the latter. This

view is reflected in participant (P05) who asserted, "Since academic issues need strict language usage, we teachers use a single language only. On social issues mixing two or more languages may not be a problem." That is, using L1 either in the forms of mixing or switching with L2 (English) is not acceptable in academic contexts. Conversely, in communication forms that occur outside classrooms (as in market places, church, pub, etc), mixing two or more languages does not pose any problem and it is rather a normal as well as an effective means of communication.

The formal communication, which is associated with teaching-learning in the classroom, has to be free from interference. This is because interference is believed to be a sign of deficiency. On the other hand, the purpose of informal communication is mainly to socialize and hence the interlocutors can do this either by mixing, translating or switching between codes. This view creates a disconnect between 'what happens out there in real world' and 'what should happen' in the L2 classroom (Escobar & Elizabeth 2015). Another point that participant (P03) made against combining English and a local language during discussion in classroom is that the practice consumes the time allotted for teaching the course.

The assumption that bi/multilingualism is a double monolingualism may have created the belief that for bi/multilingualism speakers, each language works as an entirely separate system. But translanguaging and theories of bilingualism disproved the disconnected role each language is believed to play (Escobar & Elizabeth 2015). Additionally, this double monolingualism approach to learning-teaching of L2 has spread almost all over the world, causing L1 to be pitted against L2, a practice that contradicts the sociolinguistic reality of students who naturally language bilingually in and outside of the classroom (Escobar & Elizabeth 2015). Much current research assumes the two languages are inextricably bound up with each other when we speak a second language, the first language is not turned off (Cook 2001: 17).

3.10.2. Classrooms better places for L2 (English)

A further idea that these respondents put forward for refusing the use of two languages in classroom is that in EFL context the classroom is the only place where students can practice English. Accordingly, it has to be exploited extensively for practicing and using the target language only. Consider the view of participant (P07) in the excerpt that follows: "In the first place, I stick on English language use in the classrooms for the medium of instruction demands it to be so. May be

another reason can be: classrooms are better places to exercise the language." In this perspective, by using English and only English in the classroom it would be possible to observe the language policy and to provide students with the context to practice the target language. In so doing, better learning outcomes will be obtained. Generally, it implies that the use of L1 in EFL contexts hinders the provision of enough comprehensible input which is believed to be a prerequisite for language acquisition (Krashen 1985). However, exposure alone cannot guarantee proficiency (accuracy and fluency in using the TL). Besides, though the idea is laudable, however, there is no empirical basis that can back up the supposition that exclusive TL use correlates with improved learning gains (Inbar-Lourie, 2010; Macaro, 2001; Turnbull, 2001; Auerbach, 1993) or the quantity of teacher L2 input may not be as beneficial as the quality of L2 input (Dickson 1992).

3.10.3. Good to combine English and a local language

One view which is divergent from the rest comes from participant (P04) who stated that it is okay to combine English and another language both in and outside the classroom. This outlook among other things does not put a significant difference between communications taking place in and outside classroom. Leaving other things aside, both contexts are considered as forms communication. Communicating ideas by moving back and forth between languages is a normal way of life, and there is no reason not to apply this strategy in classroom for teaching and learning purpose, which is one form of communication systems. Turnbull and Dailey-O'Cain (2009) claimed that selective and principled code-switching in L2 learning classroom contexts should be seen as a reflection of bilingual and multilingual speakers' practices in everyday life. It was also found out that when the classroom is conceptualized as a bilingual space by both students and teacher, code-switching patterns, for instance, emerge in the learners that are similar to those found in non-classroom data (Liebscher & Jennifer 2005).

3.11. Translating practice in English classroom

Participants valued the act of translating a text from English to a local language or vice versa differently. Many considered the practice as good for teaching-learning both language and content; others viewed it as a bad practice. Still few participants suggested a cautious use of translating in an L2 (English) classroom. A range of specific reasons has been presented to support and substantiate each of these claims.

3.11.1. Translation as a good practice

Overall, many participants viewed the act of translating a text from English to a local language or vice versa as a good practice, for the process improves the learners' proficiency in using the two languages. The major objective of learning is developing the ability to understand things given in class and equipping oneself with the necessary skills to extract and use local knowledge. Accordingly, participant (P02) admitted that translating is a good classroom practice as it helps to uncover indigenous knowledge and to make other communities know about it and use it. Besides, the practice of translating improves learners' competence in using the two languages. Translating practice aids students to know the systems of the source language (SL) and the target language (TL). On this point, participant (P01) added that translating is a good practice since it helps learners know the structure of the two languages in terms of orthography/phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics and thus improves L2 learning. Additionally, this practice raises learners' awareness of the similarities and differences between their first language and the target language and this is a useful way of accessing the students' schema, and alert them to potential challenges the new language may present them with (Meyer 2008).

3.11.2. Translation has to be minimized

Other participants recommended that the translating practice which takes place in an L2 classroom has to be minimal. Consider the excerpt given below:

> *Translating a text from local languages to English and vice versa is sometimes good [emphasis ours] because it can give some hint to the teacher on how much they are understanding what is being said and written. But students should learn to explain what they understand using simple English and expose themselves to the literatures without translating into the local languages (P01).*

The above excerpt illustrates that the instructor employs translating from English to the learners' local languages and vice versa so as to make sure whether the students have understood the content (in both writing and speaking) or not. And this is especially interesting because an important component of effective learning-teaching, that is, getting feedback from learners, is served by using local languages through translating, not by the target language, which is supposed to serve the entire learning-teaching taking place in university classes.

3.11.3. Translating as a bad practice

There are also some participants who considered translating as a bad practice. They think that the act of translating makes the teaching-learning of English ineffective. Besides, the practice over-burdens learners with additional, unnecessary tasks as the following excerpt demonstrates: "[Making students translate a text from local languages to English or vice versa] tends to be bad practice. Because it does not facilitate their learning of English language; rather it is addition of tasks which is not related to the lesson or the content." (P07). Translating practice affects negatively the learning-teaching of English by interfering L1 with English and by consuming the time allotted for teaching and practicing the English language. In connection with the ineffectiveness of translating, another respondent, (P05) stressed that using English in classrooms is the only way to have an effective class and therefore translating has to be avoided. This argument seems to be based on the widely held belief about how L2 should be taught and learnt. That is, instruction has to be carried out exclusively in English and this is done without making any reference to L1. The process of translation from L1 into L2 or vice versa hinders the acquisition of L2 (English).

Moreover, it was reported that translating has to be avoided in an L2 (English) classroom, for it disagrees with the basic tenets of the communicative approach, which is a dominant approach in teaching L2. Respondent (P09) viewed translating as a good method only for developing learners' writing and reading skills. However, in the eyes of the communicative approach to language teaching and learning, translating is not acceptable since it does not help learners develop their communicative skills as this method focuses on interaction in the 'target' language. Another point is that the communicative approach does not allow the involvement of L1 in the teaching and learning of L2 (English). That is to say, translation encourages learners to use L1 while the communicative approach tries to remove it from L2 class.

Translation can be regarded as a communicative activity since it involves communication between the teacher and the student. Learners are encouraged to discuss rights and wrongs as well as problems related to the translation task (Leonardi 2009). Though it is obvious that translating improves the writing and reading skills of learners, it can also develop speaking and listening skills. When students involve in a conversation on a translation topic, this helps them enhance their speaking skills. Similarly, when students are requested to talk to both the teacher and other learners,

and respond to these parties, the process gives them the chance to improve their listening and speaking skills.

Furthermore, the respondents maintained that translating is appropriate only for training translators; therefore, it has to be avoided from an English classroom. As to participant (P07), "In translation classes, it could be ideal to use native languages along with the target language. Otherwise, I don't think it is a good idea to use languages other than English in classrooms for this may share their time to exercise English." The point is that English has to be taught exclusively in English and other languages such as learners' primary languages are unnecessary, for they are believed to negatively influence the learning of the target language. Such a practice even forces learners to share their precious L2 use time with the L1.However, in certain contexts translating is a more efficient means of presenting the meanings of vocabulary items or an explanation of a grammar point (Macaro 2001; Butzkamm 2009). As a result, the need to clarify meaning through translation has been shown not only in saving time but also in facilitating L2 learning by maximizing L2 input. Moreover, Laufer & Shmueli (1997) showed that L1 translation is the most effective method for learning the meanings of L2 words compared to the other different methods.

3.12. Encouragement to use L1

Almost all of the participants maintained that they do not overtly encourage their students to use local languages in classroom. The instructors instead reported that they encourage their students to use English exclusively in the classroom. The respondents vary as to why they discourage their students from using L1 in the classroom and encourage only the use of L2 (English). Some of their reasons together with illustrative cases extracted from the transcripts have been presented below.

3.12.1. To have global perspectives

Few participants thought that using English extensively helps students develop a global perspective, for English is an international language. As one participant said, "I do not encourage my students to use their mother tongues…because I want them to have global perspectives." (P02). Developing a global perspective is increasingly vital to be successful in the 21st century. Having a global perspective equips students to understand and effectively deal with the rapid flow of information, culture and goods. Hence, using English exclusively increases one's possibility of becoming a global person and simultaneously using L1 impedes this process. The major reason for the

instructors' endorsement of English for teaching and learning was that this is an international language that plays a key role in the internationalization and globalization processes.

3.12.2. To maximize input for English

Some respondents also remarked that students should not be overtly encouraged to use local languages in the classroom since the medium of instruction in the university education is just English. For instance, participant (P03) argued, "I do not encourage my students to use their mother tongue in class where medium of instruction is English. As this is the context wher[e] my students use English in our reality." This is to suggest that English is a foreign language in Ethiopian context and hence students do not have the opportunity to use the language outside the classroom. The classroom provides learners with favorable environment to practice and to learn English better. This view is also reflected in the following excerpt of (P07): "Of course I don't encourage my students to use their mother languages in the classroom. This is because they can use their mother tongue anywhere out of the class. Thus, class time has to be devoted to use English only."

Another reason for encouraging the use of only English in class is that L1 hinders the process of learning or acquiring English. Second or foreign language learning should happen solely through the TL rather than being linked to the L1.For participant (P06), using L1 should be discouraged because it does not help students learn the English language. That is, successful learning of English is the result of separating it from the learners' L1. For this effect, participant (P09), not only discourages learners from using their primary languages, but also overtly encourages them to use only L2 (English) as the excerpt given below shows:

> No I don't encourage them [students] to use their mother language in the classroom…language is a set of skills which could be developed through practice; and this could happen when students get a chance to practice the language items. Thus, I rather encourage them to use the target language (P09)

On the contrary, few instructors do encourage students to use their primary languages, but based on certain conditions such as a last resort to avoid miscommunication, necessity and the learners' proficiency level of English as well as their ability to use a specific L1 (for the students have different linguistic backgrounds).

3.12.3. A last resort to avoid miscommunication

Participant (P01) stated that he encourages his students to use their L1s to express their concerns, unclear or doubtful ideas. This participant continued, "As a last resort to avoid communication barrier I let them to tell me for instance using Amharic or Afan Oromo." Being a multilingual teacher, participant (P01) handles learners' feedback which is expressed in either of the two local languages: Amharic and Afan Oromo. Then, it would be possible to find ways of fixing the lack of comprehension.

3.13. Encouragement depends on necessity and learners' ability

A very different response comes from respondent (P10) who emphasized the importance of encouraging the learners' to use their mother tongues when the teacher finds it necessary. According to this view, there are situations in the English classroom that call for the use of local languages. Then, if an instructor finds it necessary for students to apply their L1 to understand a certain grammatical form or notion, L1 would be used as it improves learning.

To use a local language for teaching-learning with English, it is essential that the majority of the students should be able to use this language. Unlike to the other instructors, participant (P04) encourages his students to use Amharic in the class. This is because, "The majority of the students speak Amharic, so it is okay [to use Amharic in the class].

Equally important is the idea which dictates that use of L1 should depend on gap in learners' English proficiency. As it is expressed by respondent (P01), using native languages is good when the students' command of English is very poor. That is, using learners' L1 in the English class can be beneficial in order to fill in the English proficiency gap observed on the part of the students. Here, the primary role of the L1 is to provide scaffolding in making the classroom environment comprehensible to students who are less proficient in English. Conversely, using local languages would be detrimental if the concerned learners possess the appropriate English proficiency level that enables them to effectively understand what the instructors discuss in the classroom. As a result, in such cases it would be irrelevant and unnecessary to allow the use of L1. It would rather hold the learners back from acquiring the TL.

4. Summary, Conclusion and Implications

This study was set out mainly to explore the perceptions and experiences of KUE students and teachers in using learners' primary languages in classrooms where teaching-learning is mediated through English.

The data from the student respondents showed that they used L1 in classrooms for different purposes like to analyze challenging ideas, to learn new words, to facilitate group works, etc. The research also informs us that students had positive views towards use of local languages in the teaching learning process. The other area that the research tried to find out from the students was to what extent teachers used local languages in the classrooms for several purposes. According to the analysis from the students' responses, teachers mostly used local languages to facilitate the teaching learning process. Therefore, it is possible to consider that the students had positive feelings towards use and purposes of local languages in KUE classes.

In the same way, the teachers dominantly employed local languages in classrooms for various functions, namely to remedy lack of comprehension, to provide a translation for an unknown TL word or expression, to provide instructions for activities, and to teach grammar explicitly while the language policy stipulated otherwise. The students' languages were mainly employed to avoid miscomprehension, which in turn may lower affective filters in the process of learning (Meyer 2008). However, teachers used local languages as the last options to overcome the problems they noticed from their students. They asserted that they tried other options like paraphrasing, explaining topics in a simpler language or providing additional examples before they diverted into local language use. The students' low proficiency level in English was pointed out as a major reason for using local languages that may negatively affect their mastery of professional knowledge. One deviation from this is observed in a few English instructors who strongly opposed the use of local languages for teaching English except for content subjects.

Translation and code-switching were found to be the principal strategies that the instructors used primarily to remedy students' lack of comprehension. The majority of the instructors thought neither they violated the MoI, nor committed professional misconduct in resorting to learners' L1s. This contradicts with similar studies that reported as teachers often make clear their moral disapproval of language mixing in the classroom, and feel embarrassed about their translanguaging, describing it as resulting from carelessness and professional misconduct (Creese & Blackledge

2010). The study also implies that the English-only medium of instruction in KUE appeared to disregard the needs of both learners and instructors. Consequently, we call for a flexible language policy for medium of instruction (for teaching both content and language) that would respond to the needs and the linguistic competencies of the students as well as current theories of bi/multilingualism.

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Conflict of interest

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

Authors' contribution

Both authors contributed equally.

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Original Article

Examining moral values in the policy document and in the contents of moral texts: An overview

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Abstract

The aim of this article was to scrutinize moral values in the contents of moral texts and in the policy document. Having this aim, the researcher used document analysis (policy documents and the moral text books). The education system has missed the chief aim of education which is the formation of character achieved through moral education. The blind reliance on western education costs us much and the moral matters have been weakened by western education which has controlled our youth's thinking. Although holistic human personality requires virtues like rational thinking, preserving one's cultural values and moral principles, these traits have not been central to the objectives of the education and this has immense implications for the behavior of students. The recently introduced moral text books were far from dealing the valid contents of moral issues. To heal our education system, there is a need to rethink the objectives of education of the country and prepare appropriate moral texts for the renewal of the eroded Ethiopian moral values.

Keywords: objective, education, moral

1. Introduction

Evil doings (cheating, lying, theft, gambling, homosexuality, the use of illicit drugs, nepotism, tribalism, corruption and the like) are the results of human endeavor in an attempt to gratify his needs. But these needs could be nurtured by moral and spiritual principles. Educational objectives lacking moral/spiritual matters are devoid of the guiding principles for the formation of learners' personality. This is because the essence of moral matter is to develop in the hearts of learners a sense of unselfishness, love, respect, tolerance, patience, holiness and self-sacrifice. Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all (Aristotle). Educating the heart refers to the importance of not only focusing on developing the cognitive aspects (our minds) but also all the qualities that make us human (our hearts) and ultimately give us meaning in our lives. In this case,

true moral lessons have the potential to unlock personality traits like being humble, honest, respectful, tolerant, patient, holy, fair and the like.

These traits, which have been eroded through time, have been the values of the Ethiopian society before the advent of modern education in Ethiopia. In this regard, Germa (1973) noted that the overemphasis on the extrinsic value of education in many African schools and universities denies the youth African scholars the opportunity to develop these qualities. Baker (2005) argued that schools are indeed institutionalized organizations whose functions extend beyond the purely academic or economic matter. In a similar manner, Germa et al. (1974) argued that education should emphasize the formation of a man rather than on training him for an occupation. That is, the aim of education is not only to prepare trainees for the world of work; or it is not only the mere matching of manpower supply to manpower demand; or it is not the mastery of pure academic skills. Rather, the chief objectives of education are the formation of a man that extends beyond the mastery of employability skills. In explaining the objective of education, Baker further (2005) clearly stressed that the deeper institutional value of the ‘‘individual as moral social actor’’ is more influential than even the ‘‘individual as human capital producer,’’ Furthering the discussion, Germa et al. (1974) asserted that if knowledge and skills provide the means the moral and cultural values provide the ends for which such means are to be used.

According to this view, the aim of education has to nurture each student as the complete individual coupling academic and moral integrity. Simply stated, the intrinsic value of education is the formation of rational human beings governed by the principle of commitment, honesty, patience, kindheartedness, tolerance, truthfulness, courtesy, loyalty, justice, sincerity, endurance, courage, self-control, non-violence, forgiveness, and the like. Brennen (1999) on his part noted that education enables humans to achieve their fullest personal, social and physical potentials. Germa et al. (1974) further noted that an educational system that merely provided knowledge and skills without the essential blend of such value is in danger of producing soulless and rootless robots. In clarifying the point under discussion, education must give high premium to the moral and cultural heritages or values of the society. In summarizing the above points, Germa et al. (1974) argued that if educational objectives are to reflect the basic aspirations of the society they are meant for, then they cannot fail to include a moral dimension.

Thus, this article needs to assess moral values in the policy document and in the moral text books. So far, no-one has made a record of examining moral values in light of policy document and moral text books. Thus, this article fills in this gap. In light of this, the main objective of this article is to examine moral values in the contents of policy document and in the moral text books.

2. Methodology

In the current study, the researcher has employed document analysis (policy documents and moral text books). Document analysis has served as a complement to other research methods and as a stand-alone method (Bowen, 2009). That is, document analysis could be applicable in some specialized forms of qualitative research that solely rely on the analysis of documents (Bowen, 2009). In studies where document analysis was used as a sole research method, content and thematic analyses were used complementary to produce research findings (Kutsyuruba, 2017). Owing to this, the present researcher has used both content and thematic analyses as components of document analysis.

The researcher used thematic analysis for examining the moral texts by exploring patterns across the texts and he used content analysis for the policy document, by exploring the presence of moral concepts in the policy document. In such cases, he tried to describe the characteristics of the policy document. With regard to moral text books, MoE prepared moral texts from grade one to six. As a sample representative sample, the researcher took grade one, two, five and six moral text books. For the policy document, the researcher considered two education and training policies issued in 1994 and 2023. During analysis, the researcher followed the procedures of document analysis which include identifying the meaning unit, re-contextualization and categorization.

3. Results and Discussions

As per the aim of the study, the results and discussion section has two broad divisions, examining moral values in the policy document and in the moral text books. In view of this, the first section dealt with moral values in the policy document and the second section of the analysis was about examining the contents of moral text books.

3.1. Moral values in the policy document

Before the emergence of modern education, traditional education had been carried on exclusively by the Orthodox Church and this was backed up by Islamic educational system. In both religious

institutions, the objective of education was geared towards producing qualified individuals devoted to serve their own respective religious institutions (Teshome, 1979). That is, the aim of traditional education in Ethiopia is to prepare priests, monks, deacons, teachers who would give religious services in the church's program but church education was also able to produce civil servants such as judges, teachers, governors, scribes, treasures and general administrators (Teshome, 1979; Ephraim, 1971). This happened because there was no other educational institution producing trained civil servants.

Upon the advent of modern education in Ethiopia, the objectives of Ethiopian education have been regrettably oscillating along with the changes of governments and regimes. That is, the objective of Education has had a variety of modalities changing in line with the changes of the political ideology of governments and the country has never had a long standing policy that embodies the picture of the country. During the Imperial Period, education aimed at spreading the idea of the perpetual rule of the feudal lords with a God-chosen emperor at the top and after the down-fall of the Imperial government, the Derg sought to construct an education system which was highly skewed to inculcating the Marxist Junta (Germa, 1967).

After the downfall of Derg regime, the EPRDF regime issued a new education and training policy in 1994. The federal government is committed to decentralization that provides each region with autonomy accompanied by fiscal decentralization (Education Sector Development Program IV, 2002). As it is stipulated in the former Education and Training policy (1994), the general objectives of education in Ethiopia are to:

1. develop the physical and mental potential and the problem-solving capacity of individuals by expanding education and in particular by providing basic education for all;
2. bring up citizens who can take care of and utilize resources wisely, and who are trained in various skills, by raising the private and social benefits of education;
3. bring up citizens who respect human rights, stand for the well-being of people, as well as for equality, justice and peace, endowed with democratic culture and discipline;
4. bring up citizens who differentiate harmful practices from useful ones; and who seek and stand for truth, appreciate aesthetics and show positive attitude towards the development and dissemination of science and technology in society;

5. cultivate the cognitive, creative, productive, and appreciative potential of citizens by appropriately relating education to environment and societal needs.

As it can be seen from the objectives of education above, the first and the fifth objectives of education have similar spirit; the proper cultivation of the cognitive domain might make learners be creative, productive and appreciative and physically fit. The second objective might let learners use resources wisely whereas the third objective expects students to be just and to respect human rights. The fourth objective requires students to stand for truth, appreciate aesthetics and show desirable attitude to development.

Despite the fact that there are vertical and horizontal relationships among subjects in terms of contents, the school subject deemed appropriate to materialize the formation of 'good citizens' is 'Civics and Ethnical Education' which has generally the following eleven contents: building a democratic system, the rule of law, equality, justice, patriotism, responsibility, industriousness, self-reliance, saving, community participation and the pursuit of wisdom. These contents are taught from grade five to university level with certain degree of variation. Most of the personality traits stated in the objectives of education (such as traits of being creative, productive, peaceful, wise, economical, appreciative, just, and the like) and the contents of the course (justice, patriotism, responsibility, industriousness, self-reliance) could not arm students with basic moral and social values of the society.

Moral values, the weightier matter of life in the formation of personality, are not addressed in the objectives of education and in the contents of the subject, 'Civics and Ethnical Education'. Owing to this, the objectives of education could not make learners be rational human beings having missions for themselves, for the family, for the community and for the country at large. The foundational objectives of education, moral matters, are left un-discussed both in the objectives of education and in the contents of the course, 'Civics and Ethnical Education'. Instead, the Education and Training policy (1994) has given due attention to decentralization. Criticizing the Ethiopian education policy, UNESCO (2007) states that the cardinal principles which form the basis for the provision of educational services are: decentralization of the management of education, people participation, equitable distribution of educational services and the development of local culture and language.

During the current regime of Prosperity Party (PP), MoE (2023) has also issued a new Education and Training policy which does not show much difference from the previous policy except the catchy slogans which try to persuade citizens about the change of the policy. However, the new Education and Training policy (2023), despite its flaws, has included the subject moral education in the Ethiopian educational landscape. As it is set in the Education and Training policy (2023), the general objectives of education in Ethiopia are to:

1. offer free quality education from KG to junior level to all citizens by developing the cognitive, social, physical, spiritual values of citizens;
2. associate the education and training policy with the personal and social values which include economic development and change;
3. develop those skills (moral education, issues prevailing peace) upon graduates who are committed for the establishment of the government;
4. produce graduates who are competent in the international level, who give response to the diversified economic development;
5. produce graduates who accept diversity, know their history, love their mother land and fellow citizens, who respect democratic rights, who stand for justice and arm themselves with moral, and ethical principles
6. produce graduates who are reasonable, self-confident, innovative, competent, stand for truth and admire beauty, committed to develop indigenous knowledge;
7. link the education policy to the existing socio-cultural milieu.

As noted above, at face value, the objectives of education (particularly objectives stated under objective two, three, five and six) are to develop the personal and social competences of graduates that enable them to respect democratic rights, be reasonable, and accept diversity and the like. Despite the objectives stated above, there is no specific subject/course mentioned which materializes those objectives stated above if formal education is taken into account. Had the education system considered the contribution of non-formal education, the objectives of education should have made remarks in relation to non-formal education. The policy document neither says about non-formal education programs like (community-based programs) that cultivate the indigenous culture and education system nor elaborates the development of moral issues upon the minds of the students.

In both policy documents, moral values have never been the core elements of the policy document. In a society in which morality has a strong base, it seems unreasonable to exclude these values from the objectives of education. In a culture with deep moral roots, it would be unfair to exclude the moral aspects in the objective of education.

The powerlessness of the educational objectives to form rational human beings could partly contribute for the present societal crisis. For the last three regimes, there have been a number of crises and conflicts in the country caused by inequalities, unequal distribution of national resources, injustices, exclusions, nepotism, corruptions, poverty, bad governance, ethnic politics and the like. All these have led to the breakdown of social cohesion leading to violent conflicts in schools. To worsen the matter, universities which are incubators of ideas have been setting of conflicts. At present, students' aggressive and violent behavior in the university remains a significant threat to safe and secure learning environments and students do not come to university with all the necessary social skills and experiences to cooperate with each other (Arega & Mulugeta, 2017). Similarly, Abebaw (2014) noted that there have been several ethnic tensions and conflicts in different parts of the country, and also in public universities since the introduction of ethnic federalism. Students' interpersonal conflicts are very serious in many universities in Ethiopia in general (Yalew, 2007; Miressa, 2018). At present, in most public organizations including academic institutions which are supposed to become a basis for new insights and rational human beings are center of academic theft and nepotism. The social crisis and the deterioration of pro-social traits among the population are to a certain extent the results of the education system that learners have passed through. Recent events, like September 11, 2001, brought most Americans to a point of dramatic disorientation, not least of all about the role of teachers and the nature of their education (Gal, 2005).

Over three decades, Ethiopian students have long traded on the politics of antagonism, resulting in failure to communicate with each other over the most important social matters. In addition to this, there have been rampant bribery, corruption, fraud, favoritism, nepotism, impunity in every sector of the education. The World Bank (2012) reported that there have nepotism and favoritism in the country. To worse the matter, the World Bank noted that there is significant risk of corruption in examination which includes forged admission cards, assistant from invigilators, schools and local officials. To improve this condition, MoE has made the secondary school leaving examinations be

given at universities. But for the problems that the country faces, nothing is more important to Ethiopians than moral education and a sound education policy.

In a country where individuals fight for their ethnic group's position, where citizens are ethnically divided, when gross human rights are violated and ethnic federalism has been the building blocks of the political philosophy, it is quite hard to realize the real objective of education. Without changing the political ideology, it seems a wishful thinking to comprehend the objective of education in Ethiopia.

The process of moral text preparation has also been prepared under the yoke of the aforementioned malpractices. The quality of the moral texts seems to be a testament to the situation.

3.2. Moral values in the moral text books

As a representative sample, four moral text books (grade one, two, five and six) were examined. The following table depicts the contents of grade one and grade two moral text books.

Table 1: Grade one and two moral text books

Unites	Grade One	Grade Two
Unit 1	Children's self-discipline	Self-respect
Unit 2	Children's discipline in the family	Pursuit of truth and honesty
Unit 3	Neighborliness	justice
Unit 4	Students' school discipline	Positive social interaction
Unit 5	Knowing community values	Concerns for the common good
Unit 6	Knowing local cultures	Cultural heritage

As noted in the table above, the first three unit of grade one moral education contains lessons about self-discipline (the meaning, key behaviors of self-discipline and importance of children's self-discipline). In a similar manner, the second unit is about children's self-discipline in the family (the meaning of family and the importance of family). The third unit of grade one is concerned about neighborliness (the meaning of neighborliness, traits of neighborliness and importance of good neighbors). Likewise, the first three units of grade two moral education has talked about self-respect (the concept, importance and ways of showing self-respect), pursuit of truth and honesty(the meaning of truthfulness and honesty, types of truthfulness and honesty) and justice(meaning of

justice, the concept of fairness, importance of fairness). The following table also shows the contents of grade five and grade six moral text books.

Table 2: Grade five and six moral text books

Unites	Grade five	Grade six
Unit 1	Discharging responsibility	Moral integrity
Unit 2	The culture of hard working	Law abidingness
Unit 3	Moral-decision making skills	Good behavior
Unit 4	Caring for the environment	Participation in socio-economic activities
Unit 5	The ethics of using social media	Pursuit of patriotism
Unit 6	Intercultural relations	Peace and cooperation

As pointed out above, the first three units of grade five moral education has talked about discharging responsibility (the meaning, attributes and importance of discharging responsibility), the culture of hard working (the meaning, importance and characteristics of the culture of hard working) and moral-decision making skills (meaning, attributes and steps of moral-decision making skills). In the same manner, the first three units of grade six moral topics are about moral integrity (the meaning, attributes and importance of moral integrity), law abidingness (the meaning, importance and characteristics of law abidingness) and good behavior (the meaning, attributes and importance of good behavior).

The moral text books which are prepared by Ministry of Education from grade one to six appear to be far from addressing the intents of its initial objectives. Most of the contents of the texts have never taught morality but rather they taught about morality. Arming the students with moral traits (such as kindness, honesty…) are the goal of moral education which is what the education system aims to achieve. But this aim cannot be addressed by teaching the definition, importance of theoretical moral-related issues. Instead of talking about the importance of discipline, self-respect, responsibility, integrity and the like, we need to teach students to be kind, respectful, honest, and obedient by using various tasks or moral activities.

Students need to develop moral principles through storytelling, role playing, presenting scenarios, problem-based approach, moral model, action learning, and the like. In a similar manner, the contents of moral education should be personality traits like kindness, patience, honesty, respect,

gratitude, empathy, obedience, sharing, commitment, fairness, equality and the like. But all these contents are not presented in the textbooks through diverse moral tasks and activities. The central contents of morality which are the hearts of the matter in the development of personality are not touched. Without incorporating moral matters, it seems hard to find behavioral changes in the learners since moral affairs which have an intact potential to convert people to developing pro-social traits are ignored.

The Ministry of Education was approached to address the issues raised; however, the Office has turned a deaf ear to the matters due to a servant-owner power attitude. Owing to this, the appellant was cold shouldered by the Minister. This happened because educational policy agenda was exclusively shaped by higher officials of the government politicians, not by the practitioners. To better reflect this point, Freire (2005) noted that many political and educational plans have failed because their authors designed them according to their own personal views of reality. Similarly, Seyoum (1996) noted that the attempts made so far at educational reforms in Ethiopia had been quite prescriptive, with hardly little or no input from the general public.

4. Conclusion

The consequence of missing a rational objective of education and a sound teaching text of moral education has partly put the country in a vicious circle of crisis.

Ethiopia, regrettably, has never had long-term education policy, encompassing the common needs of the population. Objectives of education have been changed along with the change of the governments and regimes. Education needs to sharpen the Ethiopian youth to be critical thinkers and not mere reflectors of Western's thought which stands in sharp contrast with our traditional education in terms of moral values.

The pursuit of full humanity has to encompass qualities such as respect, obedience, loyalty, perseverance, patience, kindheartedness, accountability and the like which are the virtues of morality. Moral education is basically an elaboration of the principles of love of one's fellow human beings which is a basic tenet of all religions (Germa et al., 1974). These virtues also reflect the cultural conditions of the surrounding social value. The binding forces for all humanity are common moral values which need to be prolonged in the school structure through moral or character education. A common thread running through all human beings is holding a common moral code

that guides learners to the path of righteousness, truth and desirable behavior. Education system that does not rest upon the development of personality having moral values lacks an important ingredient. Thus, moral values that the society has had have to be prolonged by the education policy that the country follows.

Non-existence of moral values in the curriculum has been one among the many reasons for the current wide-spreading corruption, injustices, contradictions, and problems in our country. In a state of moral bankruptcy where the core moral values are missing, students are prone to committing immoral acts. For such moral bankruptcy, the contribution of the education system is sadly immense. The policy document which encompasses moral education could partly heal the society suffering from injustice, discrimination and immoral acts but it has not been prepared as it should be.

In view of the points above, it is suggested that the current objective of education and moral text books are subject to critical scrutiny. To look at the past in order to interpret the course of the future may not only be extremely valuable but necessary (Ephraim, 1971). In doing so, we need to rebuild the moral fabric of the society by instilling moral instruction in the conscience of the youth through plausible objective of education and moral texts.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declares that no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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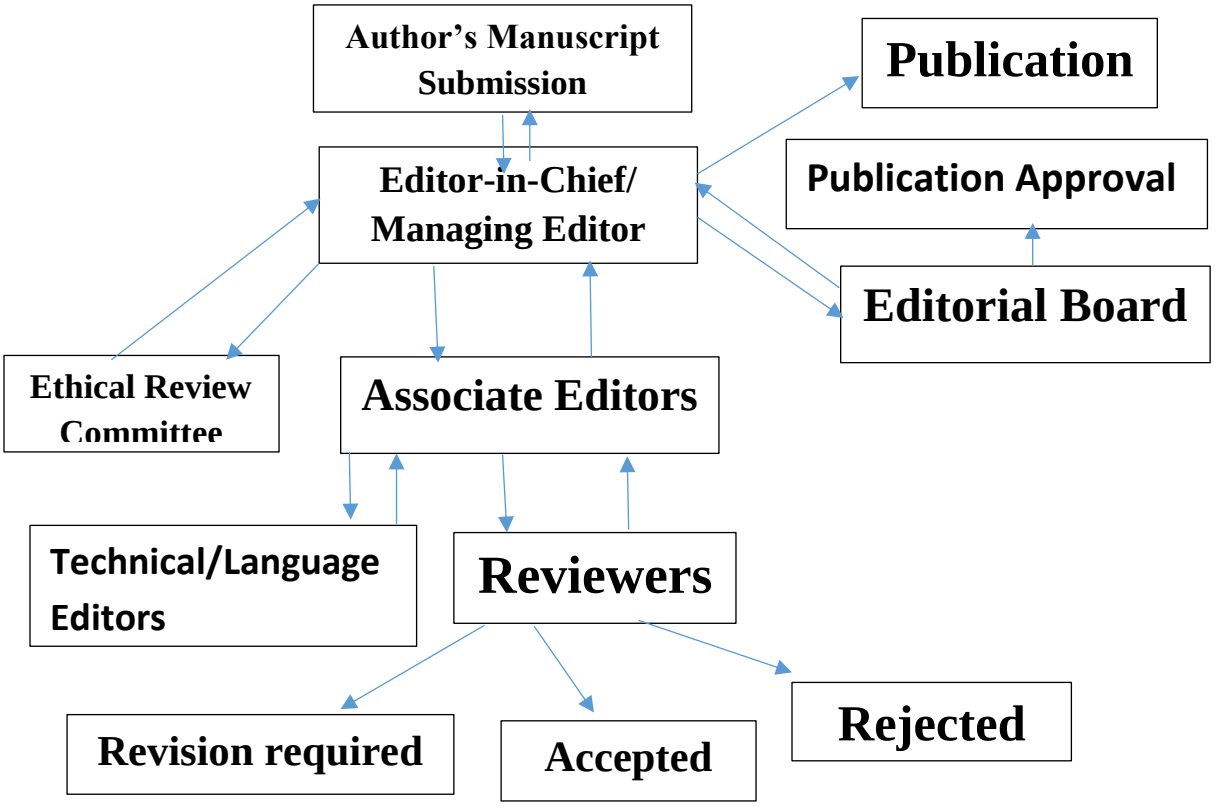

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