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EDITORIAL NOTE

Striving to Disseminate Research that Informs and Improves Educational Practices and Policies

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Dear readers,

I would like to welcome you all to this issue of our journal, BJE 23 (1). On behalf of the journal's editorial team, it gives me great pleasure to write this editorial message.

Bahir Dar Journal of Education (BJE), first named as Education Bulletin, is a scholarly publication at Bahir Dar University (BDU). It is a reputable bi-annual journal published by the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, Bahir Dar University. BJE was among a few journals in Ethiopia accredited by the then Ministry of Science and Higher Education in 2020. Since its establishment, 22 volumes, 44 issues, and many manuscripts with prominent significances for the Ethiopian education system and beyond have been published.

Compared with other BJE issues, the current issue is released at a time when the journal and its publisher are going through some major developments. The first significant development in this regard is the fact that CEBS and BDU are celebrating their 50th and 60th anniversaries respectively. CEBS, which was formerly known as the Academy of Pedagogy, was inaugurated in 1974 to train qualified teacher educators for the country's teacher training institutes (Fantahun & Tsegaye, 2014). Throughout its 50-year journey, CEBS has been a prestigious national institution in the field of education in general and teacher education in particular. The contribution of BJE to this institutional prestige, we believe, has been quite significant. The journal editorial team will strongly work to sustain this legacy. By publishing and disseminating quality research outputs that inform and improve educational practices and policies, BJE will remain committed to discharge its responsibility of maintaining the reputation and credibility of CEBS.

The present issue is published with another event of institutional significance. Recently, the senate of BDU has ratified a document that designates CEBS as a center of excellence for Teacher Education and Leadership Development. We believe that this decision is essential for the CEBS to have greater autonomy to discharge its institutional responsibilities. The forthcoming issues of BJE, therefore, will give due prominence to this new institutional duty of the college. In this regard, great emphasis will be placed on manuscripts that contribute significantly to teacher education and leadership development.

Another important historical event that makes the present issue different from its predecessors is the fact that it is published at a high time when journal indexing and abstracting

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have become one of the top priorities of BJE's editorial team. To improve the visibility and impact of manuscripts that we publish, we are rigorously working to index the journal in prestigious national, continental, and international journal indexing institutions and databases. So far, we are able to index BJE in the Ethiopian Journals Online (EJOL) and the Google Scholar Databases. Quite recently, BJE has been indexed in the African Journals Online (AJOL) database. The inclusion of BJE in these databases is improving the journal's visibility and impact. For instance, as editor-in-chief, I am observing more manuscripts coming to BJE from many African scholars. Motivated by this, currently, the journal's editorial team is making unreserved efforts to index the journal in other world-class journal indexing and abstracting institutions. We have already submitted applications to some well-known databases. We expect their positive responses soon.

As our esteemed readers may have observed, the journal has been striving to raise the quality of the manuscripts it publishes. As part of this effort, the editorial team has been diligently working to make the journal's double-blind peer review editorial process more rigorous and standardized. Due to this, encouraging results have been seen in issuing high-quality manuscripts submitted by academics from various local and international higher education institutions. By doing so, we believe, BJE is discharging its responsibility of publishing manuscripts that contribute to the advancement of educational policies and practices at the national and international levels.

Along with the issue of quality, we are currently working to increase the number of manuscripts published in one issue. So far, we have been publishing only four to five manuscripts per issue. In the previous issue (Vol. 22, Issue 2), however, we managed to publish six manuscripts that addressed various educational issues. Most importantly, in the present issue, we are able to publish seven manuscripts, in addition to this editorial note. We anticipate further improvements in the quantity of manuscripts in the upcoming issues. By doing this, we will not only create a better space for the publication of more manuscripts, but we will also adhere to our revised editorial policy, the research and publication guidelines of Bahir Dar University (BDU, 2019), and the new guidelines put forth by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education which is the national journal accreditor (MoE, 2022).

The editorial team of the journal is resolute that every effort should be made to improve the diversity of manuscripts published in each issue of BJE. The journal's revised editorial policy also makes this point very clear. As it can be noticed, so far, we have been predominantly publishing articles of original research works. Stated another way, BJE has not been sufficiently publishing other manuscripts such as reflections, document reviews, book reviews, letters to the editor, invited articles, and editorial notes. In response to this limitation and the directions of our revised editorial policy, the journal will do its best to publish other types of manuscripts in upcoming issues. The inclusion of this editorial note, the first in the history of BJE, needs to be considered as part of our effort in this regard. I would like to take this opportunity to invite academics, readers and subscribers to submit their reflections, document reviews, book reviews, letters to the editor, and other manuscripts addressing various educational issues to our journal.

In this issue, we published seven manuscripts that emanate from original research projects. They are authored by 17 scholars from four universities in two countries and continents. The

manuscripts could be broadly put under five categories. In this regard, two of the manuscripts exclusively focus on issues of Higher Education while the other two present research findings from the field of Educational Leadership. The remaining three manuscripts, on the other hand, deal with educational issues from the fields of Special Needs and Inclusive Education, Curriculum Theory, and Language Teaching.

In the first manuscript of the present issue, the authors (Tsigie Genet Zegeye, Solomon Kassie Alem & Ayetenew Abie) sought to investigate the self-efficacy of in-service public primary school teachers in Amhara National Region State to practice the major professional responsibilities while teaching Inclusive Education. Using the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) scale, the authors examined the effects of teachers' gender, level of education, and teaching experience in practicing Inclusive Education. In their study, the authors explored that teachers had a low level of self-efficacy to practice the various principles of inclusive education in their classrooms. The authors also briefly showed the implications of their findings for future teacher education policies and practices.

The second manuscript by Medhanit Adane Solomon, Amare Asgedom Gebremedhin, and Kassahun Weldemariam Tigistu examined the conceptualizations and associated trends of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in higher education. It also explored the challenges that hinder academic staff from engaging in CPD in higher education. Based on the data they collected through Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses-PRISMA, the authors indicated that there were varied conceptualizations of CPD in higher education. They also highlighted the trends and challenges of CPD along with potential solutions for higher education institutions.

Coming to the third manuscript, the issue of employability skills acquisition, a less researched educational agenda, is given prominence. Using the legitimation code theory as a theoretical framework and questionnaires adapted from renowned scholars of the field, the authors (Sara Jehi Oumer, Meskerem Lechissa Debele & Amera Seifu Belayneh), attempted to analyze the employability skills acquisition of graduating students of three public universities in Ethiopia. In this study, the authors found evidence of all four specialization codes—knowledge, knower, élite, and relativist codes—in universities with regard to various sets of employability skills. They also showed how students' legitimation codes could be used to explain their employability skills.

The fourth manuscript of the present issue discusses secondary school principals' adaptive leadership practices in response to the COVID-19 crisis in Bahir Dar city administration, Ethiopia. Based on quantitative data gathered through a questionnaire from 242 randomly selected secondary school teachers, the two authors (Abebaw Ayana Alene & Melaku Mengistu Gebremeskel) came up with some findings about the city administration's secondary school principals' adaptive leadership practices in managing the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

In the fifth manuscript, Tadesse Melesse Merawi and Esuyawkal Tessema Ageze reflected on the curriculum development process of Ethiopia in light of Patrick Slattery's postmodern curriculum principles. Using the five curriculum development principles (rejection of metanarratives, artificial bifurcations, the interconnectedness of individual experiences in a global

context, the assertion and validation of everyone's voice in the school community, and understanding of the complexity of metaphysics) of this eminent scholar, the authors attempted to examine various educational and curricular documents of the country. They also came up with findings that have valuable implications for curriculum development practices in Ethiopia.

Then, in the sixth manuscript, we get a research report titled "the effect of transformational leadership, teachers' openness to experience and gender on innovative work behavior in higher education institutions". In this manuscript, Habtu Gebreslassie Bahru, Amare Sahle Abebe, and Tilaye Kassahun Ayen reported some insightful research findings. These findings, in my opinion, are of high significance not only to the higher education institutions that the researchers investigated but also for the field of higher education leadership in general.

In the seventh manuscript of the present issue, Haileyesus Wudu Mekonnen reported his research findings vis-à-vis early grade reading. In this manuscript, the author presented the experience of one primary school, Donaberber primary school, in helping students improve their skills of reading. The finding of this study revealed, through different strategies (e.g., by spending available resources differently, optimal use of instructional time, making reading an instructional priority for the first three months of the academic year, and through the application of some innovative pedagogies), the school was able to provide its students with the foundational opportunities that in turn helped them to read within a few months.

Finally, I would like to thank all the authors, reviewers, editors, and advisory board members for the interest you showed in our journal, and most importantly, for the vital roles you played in the editorial process of this issue. Using this opportunity, I would also like to call upon you all to continue the unreserved efforts and professional services you are rendering to our journal. I am confident that together, we can further improve the quality, visibility, and impact of BJE and make it a better, most preferred, and highly accessed publication venue for the educational research community in Ethiopia, Africa, and beyond.

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In-service Teachers' Self-efficacy to Practice Inclusive Education at Public Primary Schools in the Amhara Region: Implications for Teacher Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' self-efficacy for practicing inclusive education at public primary schools in the Amhara region and examining the effect of teachers' gender, level of education, and teaching experience. The study used a survey design. Participants included 336 public primary school teachers selected using a stratified systematic random sampling technique. The teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) scale was administered to sample teachers. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Teachers showed low level of self-efficacy on the TEIP scale. While gender did generate variations in teacher self-efficacy for practicing inclusive education, level of education and teaching experience did not generate significant variations. The results generally revealed that teachers had low sense of self-efficacy to practice inclusive education. It implies that the knowledge and skills teachers gained in special needs and inclusive education in teacher training programs were not adequate enough to practice inclusive education. Therefore, to make inclusive education useful for all students including students with special needs, it is essential to revisit teacher training programs in Ethiopia.

Introduction

These days, inclusive education is considered as the best approach to meet the unique learning needs of children with disabilities and special needs in their neighborhood age appropriate regular classrooms (Alquraini & Gut, 2012; Ydo, 2020). In an inclusive education practice, everyone particularly teachers are supposed to work to make sure that children with disabilities feel welcome and valued, and that they get appropriate support to help them develop their talents

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and achieve their goals (Kazanopoulos, Tejada, & Basogain, 2022; Kristiana & Hendriani, 2018). When implemented properly, inclusion promotes quality and equitable education for all, without exclusion, including those who may be potentially marginalized by learning needs or social positions (Hitches, Woodcock, & Ehrich, 2022; Woodcock, Sharma, Subban, & Hitches, 2022).

Since the 1980s, developed nations have been moving towards an inclusive approach and commencing to educated all children including children with disabilities in regular classrooms (Chambers & Forlin, 2021). In many developing countries including Ethiopia however, mainstreaming inclusive approaches into their education policy and strategy is a recent phenomenon (Daniels, 2010).The Ethiopian government, in an effort to educate children with special educational needs in the regular classrooms, has introduced Special Needs and Inclusive Education Strategy into the country's education system in 2012. Consequently, the practice of inclusive education is being underway in different parts of the country's primary schools including schools in the Amhara region.

The provision of relevant and quality education for students with special needs in an inclusive setting is influenced by several factors. One of the most important factors determining the effective implementation of inclusive education is teachers' level of self-efficacy (Özokcu, 2017; Paneque & Barbetta, 2006; Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012). Teacher efficacy, an important quality required from teachers who are involved in practicing inclusive education, can be defined as a judgment of a teacher's competencies to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even when students are difficult or unmotivated (Bandura, 2012; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Teacher's perception of their self-efficacy that is whether they can do well in an inclusive classroom has an important role to play in directing teachers' behavior toward inclusion (Bandura, 2012; Kristiana & Hendriani, 2018). It is reported that teachers with a high level of perceived self-efficacy have lived with better job satisfaction (Zakariya, 2020) and handle demanding student behaviors in a more professional ways (Zee & Koomen, 2016). High teacher efficacy has also been found positively correlated with teachers' quality of pedagogy including classroom management methods and enabling a supportive classroom climate (Kristiana & Hendriani, 2018).

Teacher self-efficacy has also been stated as one of the crucial factors that affect teachers' attitudes toward practicing inclusive education. Studies (Hitches et al., 2022; Woodcock & Jones, 2020; Woodcock et al., 2022) indicated the associations between teachers' self-efficacy with their attitudes toward inclusion and their practice of inclusive education. They further revealed that teachers with a high sense of teacher efficacy have positive attitudes toward students with disabilities and their inclusion, and they have a better interest to teach in inclusive classrooms. Whereas, teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy avoid teaching in classes with special needs students and make justifications; they feel that teaching in an inclusive classroom is a challenging task and beyond their abilities (Cherry, 2020; Donnelly, 2022; Kristiana & Hendriani, 2018).

Several studies were conducted to see the effect of demographic characteristics of teachers (e.g., gender, education, and teaching experiences) on their self-efficacy for practicing inclusive education. Regarding the associations between gender and teacher efficacy, contradictory results were obtained. While studies conducted by Mohamed Emam & Al-Mahdy (2020), Özokcu, (2018)

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and Specht and Metsala (2018) revealed that the degree of teachers perceived self-efficacy were higher for female teachers as compared to their male counterparts, Reyhan & Babanoğlu 2016) found the opposite where male teachers had higher perceived self-efficacy beliefs than female teachers. In a more recent study, Kazanopoulos et al. (2022) also indicated gender as an insignificant factor in influencing teachers perceived self-efficacy for practicing inclusive education.

Concerning the effect of education and training on teacher efficacy, Wray, Sharma, and Subban (2022) indicated that knowledge and skill of inclusive education policies and strategies can raise the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers. Özokcu (2018) also found that the levels of teacher self-efficacy were higher for teachers who had taken previous courses about special education and teachers who have previously interacted with an individual with special needs. Additionally Matić, Škrbić, Kerkez, and Veselinović (2022) indicated that training that contributes to competencies related to the education of children with disabilities and experience in the implementation of inclusive education is connected with teachers' self-efficacy. Teachers believe in their professional abilities, knowledge, and skills to work with students with disabilities if they feel that they were well prepared to practice inclusive education (Zegeye, 2022).

The effect of teaching experience on teacher self-efficacy was another issue of concern among researchers. Wray et al. (2022) revealed that teaching experience and teaching context have an impact on teacher self-efficacy. Özokcu (2017) found that the levels of teacher self-efficacy were higher for experienced teachers. Mohamed Emam and Al-Mahdy (2020) also indicated that among Omani teachers who participated in the study, novice and inexperienced teachers reported higher teacher efficacy for inclusive practice in the collaboration dimension of teacher efficacy for inclusive practice scale compared to teachers with moderate experience, whereas experienced teachers and teachers with moderate teaching experience reported higher teacher efficacy for inclusive practice compared to novice teachers.

The preceding research results imply that when planning to implement inclusive education, one should first make sure that teachers have the required level of teacher efficacy that may help them practice inclusive education. The results further imply that assigning teachers to inclusive classrooms without adequate knowledge and skills of special needs and inclusive education may affect teacher efficacy for practicing inclusive education. This will also affect the effective implementation of inclusive education. In primary schools in the Amhara region, the implementation of inclusive education has been started without knowing regular school subject teachers' readiness for inclusive education practice, and to date, there is no research done to inform us about the state of teachers' perception of their self-efficacy for practicing inclusive education. Knowing teachers' level of self-efficacy before and/or during practicing inclusive education is vital to identify teachers' needs and devising appropriate training that helps enhance their sense of self-efficacy. This plays a pivotal role in constructing teachers' capability to cope with the demands of inclusive education practice(Martins & Chacon, 2021).

Problem Statement

Inclusive education requires that subject teachers become motivated, innovative, creative and flexible, and exhibit competence and confidence in their ability to accomplish various activities in an inclusive classroom. This performance helps to create improved performance and achievement of all students with and without special educational needs. Teachers who lack these attributes of self-efficacious teachers will take the responsibility of implementing inclusive education as something difficult, and they lack confidence in their capabilities (Chambers & Forlin, 2021; Zion & Sobel, 2014). This implies that if teachers who are currently teaching in our schools lack the attributes of self-efficacious teachers, they will adhere to use the traditional inflexible lesson plans and teaching approaches in a classroom where students with special educational needs are included. Furthermore, it indicates that inclusive education may not be realized in Ethiopian schools in general and in schools of the Amhara region in particular mainly by preparing, publishing and distributing several strategies and guidelines pertaining to inclusive education. Hence, to get the best out of inclusive education, among other things, schools need to have teachers who are able to effectively shoulder the challenges and demands of inclusive education.

Taking in to account the substantial roles played by teachers in the process of implementing inclusive education, the education system naturally prepares and checks teachers' self-efficacy for practicing inclusive education. However, there is no evidence which indicate that the Amhara region Education Bureau assessed whether teachers were capable to apply inclusive education or not before it started to implement inclusive education. In addition, the presence of legislations, policies, and strategies to implement inclusive education do not show that inclusive education is widely accepted and is yielding the expected benefits for all students in the Amhara region. Thus, it is significant to examine the self-efficacy of teachers who are currently teaching at primary schools for practicing inclusive education.

There is also a lack of evidence on whether the perceived self-efficacy of teachers varies due to their gender, teaching experience, and level of education. These important teacher variables that may affect teachers for practicing inclusive education in the current situation of primary schools were guided by the following research questions: (1) what is the perceived self-efficacy of teachers for practicing inclusive education at public primary schools in the Amhara region? (2) Do teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy for practicing inclusive education vary across their gender, level of education, and teaching experience?

Significance of the Study

This study generated empirical pieces of evidence about teachers' perceived self-efficacy for practicing inclusive education at public primary schools in the Amhara region. This result is primarily important for education Bureau experts, policymakers, and other concerned bodies who have a stake in the education of children with special needs in inclusive settings. The result can also shed light on the significance of revisiting teacher education programs in the country. In addition, it may contribute to the body of literature in the areas of teaching efficacy and inclusive

education and finally, the results may initiate other researchers to undertake further research on this area.

Scope of the Study

Geographically, this study was delimited to 64 public primary schools found in the Amhara region. Concerning the variables, the study was delimited to teacher-perceived self-efficacy and inclusive education practice. Specifically, teachers' perceived self-efficacy was measured using Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive practice (TEIP) scale.

Methods

Design of the Study

Survey design was employed for this study. This design is appropriate when investigating specific variables of a theoretical framework and when seeking to discover possible relationships between groups of independent and dependent variables (Brink & Wood, 1998). Using this design, perceived self-efficacy of teachers for inclusive education practice and the relationship between demographic variables with teachers' perceived self-efficacy were investigated.

Study Area

The setting for this study was Amhara region, Ethiopia. The Amhara region is one of the eleven ethnically divided regions of Ethiopia, containing the homeland of the Amhara people. Previously known as Region 3, its capital is Bahir Dar. Specifically, this research was carried out in 64 public primary schools found in eight zones of the region.

Population, Sample, and Sampling Techniques

In the Amhara region as of 2019, there are about 9000 public primary schools. Of these primary schools, 160 schools have special units for children with disabilities and special needs and started implementing inclusive education. From these 160 public primary schools with special units, 64 of them were selected using a systematic random sampling method. In the 64 primary schools, there were 2880 (1410 males and 1470 females) teachers that form the population for this study. Of these teacher population, 336 (163 males and 173 females) teachers were selected as samples for this study using a stratified systematic random sampling technique. The necessary sample size was determined to be 336 teachers using the procedures of George and Mallery (2019) and Cochran (1977) formula.

Instrument

The Teachers' Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) Scale, a standardized instrument developed by Sharma et al. (2012), was used to measure teacher-self efficacy to teach in inclusive classrooms. The scale has 20 items organized into three dimensions such as efficacy to use

inclusive instruction, efficacy in managing behavior, and efficacy in collaboration. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Response alternatives range from 0 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). Scores are determined by summing each item, with total scores ranging from 0 to 80. According to (Sharma et al., 2012) higher scores on the scale reflect greater self-efficacy for teaching in inclusive classrooms. It is also relatively recently developed in 2012 to remedy the weaknesses of earlier self-efficacy scales. This scale was reported to have sound psychometric properties with greater reliability and validity compared to other self-efficacy scales. It was tested across different cultures of respondents for reliability and the results yielded an average Cronbach's alpha of 0.87 and item correlations ranged from 0.40 to 0.75.

These shreds of evidence suggest that the TEIP scale is a simple and a reliable instrument to measure teachers' self-efficacy for teaching in inclusive classrooms. Reliability estimates were conducted using the pilot sample for the Teachers' Efficacy for Inclusive practices (TEIP) Scale. The Cronbach's alpha was found to be 0.89, which was higher than the previous use of the scale ($\alpha = .87$). Thus, this instrument is suitable for measuring teacher self-efficacy for inclusive education practice under the current context of public primary schools in the Amhara region, Ethiopia.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, quantitative data analysis methods were employed. It was carried out using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. Before starting the analysis, sub-scale scores were generated. The significance tests were examined at alpha 0.05 or 95% confidence interval. Statistical techniques such as descriptive and inferential statistics were employed. Descriptive Statistics were used to calculate the levels of teachers' self-efficacy for practicing inclusive education. Independent samples t-test was used to compare participants' self-efficacy for inclusive education practice based on gender, level of education, and teaching experience. One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was applied to find out a significant difference in teachers' self-efficacy for practicing inclusive education across their teaching experience.

Ethical Consideration

When conducting this study, the researchers followed ethical guidelines. Firstly, the researchers obtained the consent of participants. Then, they made the participants feel safe and secure regarding the information they provided on the issue under investigation. In other words, the researchers assured participants that the information they provide would be used only for research purpose. Moreover, to make participants feel more confident about the information they provided, each participant was pre-informed that her/his real name will not be used while reporting the results. They were also oriented to understand their rights to confidentiality and anonymity in the research process and the right to withdraw from the research at any time.

Results

Teachers' Perceived Self-Efficacy for Practicing Inclusive Education

In order to examine teachers' self-efficacy for practicing inclusive education considering children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms, descriptive statistics were computed. The results are presented in Table 1. This provides an indication of the range, minimum and maximum values as well as the mean and standard deviation for the self-efficacy scale in which the participants scored themselves regarding their efficacy to practice inclusive education for children with special needs in regular classrooms.

Table 1

Descriptive Scores of Teachers Self-efficacy for Inclusive Education Practice (n = 336)

	N	Range	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Mean	SD
Teachers' Self-efficacy	336	50	20	70	35.71	12.71

The results (Table 1) revealed that the mean score for teachers' self-efficacy for inclusive education practice is 35.71. This falls in the lower average range of the teacher self-efficacy for inclusive education practice scale. The minimum and maximum scores also indicate that there were no outlier scores indicating higher teacher self-efficacy score but that one or more of the teachers showed a self-efficacy score that fell in the high score range, which points to higher teacher self-efficacy for inclusive education practice.

Relationship between Demographics and Teachers' Self-Efficacy for Practicing Inclusive Education

A number of personal and environmental factors can promote or impede the self-efficacy of teachers for practicing inclusive education. The self-efficacy of teachers may be differentiated by various factors such as their gender, level of education and teaching experience. To identify any statistically significant differences among demographic variables (gender, education and teaching experience) and self-efficacy of teachers, independent samples t-test and one way ANOVA were computed. The results on these variables are presented as follows.

One of the objectives of the present study was to investigate if there was a statistically significant difference in teachers' self-efficacy for practicing inclusive education across their gender. To answer this question, participant teachers were categorized as male and female. Then, Independent samples t-test was conducted by using gender of teachers as independent variables and their self-efficacy scores as dependent variable. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Results of t-test on Teachers' Self- efficacy for Inclusive Education Practice across their Gender (n = 336)

Groups	Mean	SD	t	df
Males	39.07	12.31	4.45	334
Females	35.18	11.09		

Note. *p < .05

The t-test results (Table 2) revealed a statistically significant difference in teachers' self-efficacy for inclusive education practice mean scores, t (334) = 4.45, p < .05 of male and female teachers. The descriptive results in the table also showed that female teachers had significantly lower mean scores as compared to male teachers. The result in perceived self-efficacy in managing behavior favors male teachers (M=11.74, SD=5.87, n=163) over females (M=9.98, SD=3.39, n=173) that generated significant differences (t (334) = 3.35, p <.05). Significant differences were not found between male and female teachers perceived self-efficacy in collaboration (males, M=12.42, SD=5.27; females, M = 11.55, SD = 4.79) and in inclusive instruction dimensions (males, M=11.64, SD=5.66; females, M=11.62, SD= 4.62).

In order to examine possible differences in the perceived self-efficacy of teachers based on their level of education, t-test was computed. Comparisons were done by categorizing participant teachers in to groups of first degree and diploma holders. Independent samples t-test was computed by using level of education as independent variable and self-efficacy score as dependent variable. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Results of t-test on Teachers' Self-efficacy to Practicing Inclusive Education based on Level of Education (n = 336)

Groups	Mean	SD	T	df
First degree	38.48	10.80	1.78	334
Diploma	36.13	12.27		

Note. *p > .05

The results (Table 3) disclosed a statistically non-significant self-efficacy mean score difference to practice inclusive education between first-degree and diploma holders (t (334) = 1.78, p > .05), with first-degree holder teachers scoring insignificantly higher on the teacher efficacy scale than diploma-holder teachers. The analysis further revealed the absence of significant variation in teachers' self-efficacy in inclusive instruction dimension where first degree holders (M=12.15, SD=3.94, n=136) and diploma holders (M=11.28, SD = 6.06, n = 200) yielded insignificant mean difference (t (334) = 1.48, p >.05). Similarly, insignificant variations in teachers' self-efficacy in collaboration dimension between first degree holders (M =12.86, SD

=5.11, n = 136) and diploma holders (M = 11.54, SD = 4.27, n = 200) revealed insignificant mean difference (t (334) = 1.45, p > .05). However, significant variations in teachers perceived self-efficacy in managing behavior between first degree holders (M =14.44, SD =5.10, n =136) and diploma holders (M=10.29, SD = 4.25, n = 200) revealed significant mean difference (t (334) = 8.10, p < .00).

To explore if the teaching experience influenced the self-efficacy of teachers for inclusive education practice, the sample was categorized into seven groups based on their rank and teaching services in years. The sub-samples formed with the rank and years of teaching experience from beginner teacher < 2 years' experience to high leading teacher >18 years' experience as the details shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Teachers' Teaching Experience (n = 336)

Rank and Service years	N	Mean	SD
Beginner teacher (<2)	40	21.75	4.545
Junior teacher (3-5)	42	25.02	8.312
Teacher (6-8)	45	24.71	6.824
High Teacher (9-11)	43	30.05	10.427
Associate Teacher (12-14)	48	37.33	11.564
Leading teacher (15-17)	57	42.07	11.417
High leading Teacher (>18)	61	43.89	10.794

Then, one-way ANOVA where the teaching experience of teachers served as independent variables and total teacher self-efficacy for inclusive education practice scores as the dependent variable was conducted. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Result of Teachers Self-efficacy for Inclusive Education Practice across their Teaching experience (n = 336)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between	1141.605	6	190.267	2.079	.065
Within	30102.725	329	91.498		
Total	31244.330	335			

Note. *p > .05

As shown in Table 5 there was no statistically significant difference in teacher self-efficacy for inclusive education practice mean scores for teachers across their teaching experience (*F* (6,329) = 2.079; *p* > .05).

Discussion

Teachers' Perceived Self-Efficacy for Implementing Inclusive Education

The mean teachers' self-efficacy score of 35.71 on a score range of 0 to 80 shows lower self-efficacy of teachers for practicing inclusive education. This level of teacher self-efficacy score is an unwelcome score for any teacher required to teach in a classroom where students with disabilities and special educational needs are included. A score of 80 could be taken as a perfect and an impossible score particularly for teachers teaching under the current context of classrooms in the Amhara region. However, a mean score significantly above 40 (the middle value of the possible score range), were considered as promising results. The mean score of the participant teachers fell below the median scale value signifies a lack of self-efficacy to practice inclusive education. However, it is undeniable fact that teachers who are going to be assigned to teach in an inclusive classroom need to have a stronger and higher level of self-efficacy than other teachers teaching in non-inclusive classrooms. This is because, the implementation of inclusive education requires teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy that is instrumental to meet the diverse learning needs of all students with and without disabilities and special educational needs in an inclusive classroom (Cherry, 2020; Zegeye, 2022). Why is there such a lower level of teachers' self-efficacy? Appropriate answer/s to this question play/s a crucial role for it can guide policies and practices devised to improve teachers' self-efficacy for practicing inclusive education. These appropriate and well-taken answers to this question can appear when it is replied after discovering the factors that influence teachers' sense of self-efficacy for implementing inclusive education.

This result reveals that teachers with a lower level of self-efficacy for practicing inclusive education ho are teaching students with and without disabilities and special educational needs in regular classrooms provided little or no support to meet their special educational needs. The results of the present study indicates that teachers' low level of self-efficacy may be attributed to teachers' lack of knowledge and skills to practice inclusive education, poor administrative support, and lack of resources in schools. In line with the present study Specht and Metsala (2018) and Metsala and Harkins (2020) indicated that teachers with lower levels of self-efficacy often do not provide adequate inclusive practices for students with disabilities and special needs and are more likely to resist inclusive education practice. Furthermore, teachers with lower levels of self-efficacy are more likely to be hostile and negative to pupils with disabilities and special needs (Özokcu, 2018). Additionally, in favor of the present and past studies, Woodcock and Jones (2020) and Woodcock et al. (2022) indicated the role played by teacher self-efficacy in their practice of inclusive education. Therefore, it can be said that there is a strong connection between teachers' self-efficacy and inclusive education practice.

Teachers' Self-efficacy for Inclusive Education Practice and Demographics

Teachers' self-efficacy for practicing inclusive education may show variations depending on the knowledge and skills they have as well as availability of support provisions for them. Consequently, male and female teachers may not have the same level of knowledge and skills and support provisions that help them practice inclusive education. In the Amhara culture in which

considering males as strong and superior than females was a norm, females may be expected to avoid more demanding tasks including practicing inclusive education in regular classrooms. As one expects, the findings of this study revealed the presence of statistically significant self-efficacy mean difference between male and female teachers. It is expected that when men and women are compared based on several characteristics, the results in most cases showed male superiority. This is because in Ethiopia, though women are respected and protected, they are placed far below men in their economic and social significance (Haregewoin & Emebet, 2003). As a tradition, women here in the Amhara culture in particular, have been considered child bearers, and homemakers and are not expected to contribute anything to the economic resources of the family and the society at large (Lailulo, Sathiya Susuman, & Blignaut, 2015). Accordingly, women evaluate themselves as less able than men. Studies conducted at different times and in different contexts have found similar and contradictory results to this study. While the results obtained by Mohamed Emam and Al-Mahdy (2020) are similar to the present finding, Reyhan and Babanoğlu (2016) reveal contradictory results indicating that female teachers have better self-efficacy than male counterparts. Unlike the preceding results including this study, very recently, the effect of gender on teachers' self-efficacy for inclusive education practice was found to be to be an insignificant factor (Kazanopoulos et al., 2022). All these inconsistent results imply to us that women and men are treated differently in different cultures which shapes their attitudes toward their capability for more demanding tasks and responsibilities, and as a result, females' an males' attitudes towards practicing inclusive education are different.

As it is shown by different studies, education is one of the greatest contributing factors to self-confidence and self- Efficacy development in teachers (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006; Booth & O'Connor, 2012). It helps teachers to have improved skills and abilities by providing various means and opportunities to overcome the challenges and barriers they face in teaching students with diverse needs. It was also found that teachers who have sufficient knowledge and skills in special needs and inclusive education had higher scores on self-efficacy as compared to those teachers who have inadequate knowledge and skills in inclusive education (Alhassan & Abosi, 2014; Booth & O'Connor, 2012). However, contrary to past study results, the present study found a statistically insignificant difference in the self-efficacy for inclusive education practice mean scores of teachers across their level of education. The absence of significant difference in the present result may be attributed to the course contents of special needs and inclusive education given to first degree and diploma level student teachers that may be either similar or inadequate.

The role of teaching experience in maximizing teachers' self-efficacy for implementing inclusive education is unassailable across contexts. Taking this view in to account, the association between the teaching experience of teachers and their self-efficacy for inclusive education practice was examined. The result of the present study however showed the lack of association between these variables. Contrary to the present result, studies revealed the presence of a near-perfect trend, that is, when teachers teaching experience increases, the level of teachers' self-efficacy for inclusive education practice also increases (Irvine, 2019; Specht & Metsala, 2018). But in the present study, such a trend is not found, and it appears that teaching experience did not influence teachers' self-efficacy for practicing inclusive education. Hence, according to the present result

whether or not teachers have years of teaching experience, there is no difference among them in implementing inclusive education in regular classrooms. This absence of differences in teachers' self-efficacy across teaching experiences in the present study may be attributed to the recent introduction of special needs and inclusive education course in to the teacher education curriculum. Furthermore, it may be attributed to the lack of proper provision of this course for younger teachers who took the course which results in teachers' lack of sufficient knowledge and skills and lack of exposure to students with disabilities in regular classrooms.

Conclusion and Implications

The current study sheds light on the perceived self-efficacy of teachers for practicing inclusive education under the present context of public primary schools in the Amhara region, Ethiopia. Although some mixed results are obtained in some of the variables, the overall results of the present investigation are in agreement with the findings of previous studies. Self-efficacy levels are higher in male teachers than in female teachers. Level of education and teaching experience did not cause variations in teachers' self-efficacy for practicing inclusive education. As a group, teachers teaching in public primary schools in the Amhara region currently had low level of self-efficacy for practicing inclusive education which is indicative of lack of knowledge and skills they did get on special needs and inclusive education from the teacher training programs. Teachers with this low level of perceived self- efficacy for practicing inclusive education will not be able to manage complex teaching contexts and to respond to the unique needs of all students in their classrooms.

The results of the present study imply that teacher training institutions need to recognize the crucial functions of teacher self-efficacy for successful inclusive education practice and take appropriate actions to promote teacher self-efficacy. It is indicated that the self-efficacy of teachers for practicing inclusive education can be improved by implementing Continuous Professional Development (CPD) program that engage teachers in inclusive education activities (Nagy, 2019).

The results of the present study also imply that under the current context of primary schools in Amhara region, the CPD programs with the required depth and breadth on special needs and inclusive education should be given to subject teachers to enhance their competence for teaching in inclusive classrooms. This in-service CPD program will help ensure that teachers have the needed knowledge and skills on the instructional approaches to teaching in classrooms where students with disabilities and special educational needs are included.

The self-efficacy of prospective teachers can also be enhanced by providing sufficient knowledge and skills as well as practices on inclusive education. Teacher education institutions need to understand the roles and sources of self-efficacy. In teacher education programs, teachers should be given the chance to be mastered their respective field of study that has sufficient courses with practices in special needs and inclusive education. Practice-oriented mastery experience will help teachers to enhance their self-confidence. Regarding this, Bandura (2012) recommends that effective efforts nurture teacher self-efficacy. Hence, schools using CPD programs as well as

organizing workshops and trainings can promote the self-efficacy of teachers for practicing inclusive education.

Teacher educators should also understand the importance of teacher self-efficacy and its sources for inclusive education practice. So, teacher educators teaching in teacher training institutions need to instill in their prospective student teachers the essentials and skills of inclusive education. They need to assign student teachers during practical attachment in classrooms where students with different types of disabilities are included. This exposure and experience will help students to apply the knowledge and skills they obtained in the actual setting, and this will help them enhance their self-efficacy for inclusive education practice.

The issue of teacher self-efficacy in relation to inclusive education implementation is under researched in the Ethiopian context. The very focus of this investigation was mainly on the perceived self-efficacy of public primary school teachers for practicing inclusive education and its associations with demographic characteristics of the study participants in some selected primary schools in the Amhara region. However, the issue of teachers perceived self-efficacy for implementing inclusive education need to be investigated at schools that are found in the different parts of the country.

Limitations of the study

There were some limitations for this study that need to be mentioned. First, some participant teachers were hesitant to fill out and return the instrument-Teachers' Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) Scale in time. Secondly, the researchers were not able to include some open-ended questions that could give participants the chance to describe their opinions. If the study had used such open-ended survey questions, more detail information could have been obtained.

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Continuous Professional Development in Higher Education: A Systematic Review of its Conceptualizations, Trends and Challenges (2011- 2020)

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Abstract

The purpose of this systematic review is twofold. On the one hand, the authors investigate the conceptualizations and associated trends in staff Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in higher education. On the other hand, they explore the challenges that hinder academic staff from engaging in CPD in higher education. To this end, the authors employ Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses-PRISMA. The findings reveal that there are varied conceptualizations of CPD in higher education which include: activities and interventions taken aimed at improving knowledge, skills, and attitudes of academics. Likewise, the trends of CPD in higher education vary in form, focus area/content, strategy, and expected outcomes. The challenges hindering academics range from individual academics' attitude to their respective institution to the national policies that govern higher education. Finally, we argue that effective CPD in higher education requires a systematic, comprehensive, and well-established policy-led approach to staff development.

Introduction

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for academics in higher education has been recognized as a necessary condition for the competitiveness of the individuals and the respective institutions in which they are working. This is because higher education institutions face global challenges and are required to cope with and be responsive to fast-changing societal, cultural, and technological demands. The dynamic nature of our world at large and higher education in

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particular inevitably necessitates the need for staff to engage with CPD that can enable them to be proficient and competent in their teaching, research and community engagement. Continuous professional development is; therefore, a vital component of what governments, institutions and professionals need to do to operate efficiently in responding to contingencies and build platforms for sustainable growth in the face of continuous change.

Higher education institutions - most prominently universities - have three major pillars: education, research and contribution to society. These services can be rendered effectively and efficiently by equipping academics with subject matter knowledge and standard-based repertoires of pedagogical skills (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Dereje, 2022; Gosha et al., 2010; Guskey, 2000; Stefani, 2005).

Continuous Professional Development in higher education is important for a number of reasons. It is a significant issue in all workplaces for dealing effectively with the complexity of modern society (Bautista & Ortega-Ruíz, 2015; Loughran & Hamilton 2016; Zuber- Skerritt et al., 2015). It is also a means for academics to stay up-to-date with their content field i.e. revitalize their work with fresh ideas and the required pedagogical competence, i.e. transformative approaches to teaching which help develop students' competencies and 21st century skills such as deep mastery of challenging content, critical thinking, complex problem solving, effective communication and collaboration, and self-direction (Bautista & Ortega-Ruíz, 2015; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Suwaed & Rahouma, 2015). Despite these benefits, issues that are related to professional development of academics are an under-researched (Santos et al., 2019). It is our contention that this study contributes to the prevailing knowledge gap in the field.

In this Systematic Review (SR), the authors (we, henceforth) engage with exploring: the conceptualization of CPD, the trends around it and pertinent challenges that hinder academics from engaging with CPD in higher education globally. Due to the global nature of the topic, we chose to utilize publications both in Ethiopia and beyond. Moreover, earlier research on CPD in Ethiopia is quite sparse (Zeleke, 2012) and hence a mere focus on Ethiopia will not offer a comprehensive picture of the scenario.

To this end, this review study is framed around these three key questions: (1) How is CPD conceptualized in higher education context? (2) What are the trends of CPD in the higher education context? (3) What are the challenges that hinder academic staffs' engagement with CPD in higher education?

Literature Review

The notion of continuous professional development in higher education is attributed with a number of contestable meanings. There are several terms used internationally to define the professionalization of academics which include: teacher development programs, in-service education and training, staff development, career development, human resource development, professional development, continuing education and lifelong learning (Day & Sachs, 2004). However, even though each of these terms refers to aspects of teacher professionalization, they do have subtle differences. Avalos (2011) defines CPD as "… teachers' learning, learning how to learn and transforming their knowledge into practice for the benefit of their students' growth" (p.

10). Teacher professional learning is thus a complex process, requiring cognitive and emotional involvement of teachers both individually and collectively as a learning community. This teacher professional learning elicits a capacity and willingness to examine where each one stands in terms of convictions and beliefs and the critical examination and enactment of appropriate alternatives for improvement or change. Researches show that teachers' knowledge, skills and practice grow when they receive professional development that is coherent, focused on content knowledge, and involves active learning, integrated with school context and practiced in a collaborative way (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Desimone, 2009; Garet, et, al., 2001).

There is a variety of CPD trends across the world including formal training courses, coaching and mentoring and informal learning which takes place in work contexts, that relates to an individual's performance of their job and/or their employability, and that is not organized formally into a program or curriculum by the employer (Ercan & Ivanova, 2020; Harpe & Mason, 2014; Masoumi et al., 2019). Examples of informal learning might include the reading of professional journals in order to keep up to date with technical developments and the selection and attendance of short courses which meet the training needs that the professional himself or herself has identified (Hasan & Parvez, 2017).

In most African countries, continuous professional development is a fundamental prerequisite requirement to transform the education system. Advancing teachers' professional development is one of four outputs envisaged by UNESCO's (2006) Teacher Training Initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa, and is widely regarded as one means of leveraging systemic improvements in the education system (Ruszayak, 2018). For instance, in South Africa, promoting teacher professionalism is regarded as a strategy to address the disparate quality of learning in the classrooms (Ruszayak, 2018).

In the same vein, in Ethiopia, one of the policy measures undertaken by the Ministry of Education to enhance the quality of education in higher education institutions is the professional development of academics through the Higher Diploma Program (HDP) (Dereje, 2022; Ministry of Education [MoE], 2018). This Higher Diploma Program came into existence in 2002 following extensive research by the Ministry of Education into the overall system of education including the teacher education system (Gebru, 2016). It is licensing the teachers through a one-year training program aimed at developing the skills and professionalism of teacher educators by organizing and offering short term training in research and technology.

Theoretical Framework

This paper uses adult learning theory as a theoretical lens for studying conceptualizations, trends and challenges of CPD in higher education context. Adult learning theory was initially developed in the 1920s and more recently has been formulated as 'Andragogy' by Knowles as the science that underpins the design and implementation of adult education programs (Zuber- Skerritt et al., 2015).

Traditionally, continuous professional development has depended on external sources as agents of change and providers of solutions. These sources usually apply 'top-down' models which adopt a 'one size fits all' approach to workplace learning, ignoring the expertise and specific needs

that workers bring to a learning situation. Terms such as 'training' or 'development' suggest the worker is a passive recipient of learning programs. However, recent advances in learning theory highlight the limits of a top-down imposed training program in changing practices and improving outcomes. Consequently, the reform agenda that has driven change and innovation internationally has emphasized the need to provide professional development that is grounded in an understanding of adult learning principles (Hargreaves, 1994; Zuber- Skerritt et al., 2015). Therefore, a theoretically grounded understanding of what constitutes effective adult learning must underpin the conceptualization, design and implementation of successful adult learning programs like continuous professional development programs for academic staff. Knowles (1978) proposes a set of principles founded on a view of adult learners as self-directed and responsible for making independent decisions about their own learning. The principles of adult learning theory include the following: adults are independent, self-directed and responsible for their own learning; they possess a range of experiences that provide a rich resource for learning; adults have specific learning needs that relate to their own learning context; they focus on problem solving, and they are intrinsically rather than extrinsically motivated to learn.

More recently, Knowles et al., (2005) defined andragogy as 'any intentionally and professionally guided activity that aims at a change in adult persons and they are built on the above original principles to include individual differences, meta-learning and developmental influences on adult learning .In fact, this theory is at the heart of continuous professional development practice in which academic staffs take control of their learning, including what, when and how in relation to their teaching experience and their needs. As such, it is essential to recognize their preferences in continuous professional development programs.

Methods

A systematic review is a complete search for relevant literatures on a specific topic, and those identified are then appraised and synthesized according to a predetermined and explicit method (Klassen et al., 1998; Munn et al., 2018). This paper uses a specific systematic review methodology namely the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses, PRISMA. It is a way of synthesizing scientific evidence to answer a particular research question that is transparent and reproducible, while seeking to include all published evidence on the topic and appraising the quality of this evidence (Liberati et al., 2009; Munn et al., 2018; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2020). This review methodology can be distinguished from the traditional narrative review of the literature through its emphasis on transparent, structured and comprehensive approaches to searching the literature and its requirement for formal synthesis of research findings (Sharif et al., 2019).

Literature Search

This study is aimed at carrying out a meta- analysis of conceptualizations, trends and challenges of CPD in higher education context. In order to achieve this purpose, the study was

undertaken in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Sharif et al., 2019). We systematically searched for researches conducted on CPD in higher education studied by scholars in other countries that are published in different journals and accessed from the ERIC database and found in Google Scholars in ERIC. The following search terms were employed:((higher education) AND (continuous professional development, OR professional learning community, OR reflective practice, OR self-learning)).Ethiopian published works were searched from Google by consulting Google Scholar and Web of http:// libcat.aau.edu.et with important link AAU- ETD (Addis Ababa university website) using the following search terms: :((higher education) AND (Ethiopia) AND (continuous professional development, OR professional learning community, OR reflective practice, OR self-learning)). The researchers used the terminologies self-learning, reflective practice, and professional learning community because they are considered as effective models of professional development for academics (Suwaed & Rahouma, 2015). The search was conducted on February 18, 2022.

To create the main dataset inclusion criteria were developed. The search covered national (Ethiopian) and other countries research articles written in English and published in peer-reviewed reputable scientific journals and book chapters. We confined our search to the period 2011-2020 so that we can build our systematic review of the recent literature. The title, abstract, keywords, authors' names and affiliations, journal name, and years of publication of the identified records were exported to an MS Excel spreadsheet. Then, the full texts of the remaining papers were assessed based on the inclusion criteria (papers written in English and published in peer-reviewed reputable scientific journals and book chapters in the period 2011- 2020). After the screening of the titles and year of publication, a total of 35 that is, 29 articles from other countries (nine articles from Asia, 12 articles from Europe, three articles from Africa, three articles from North America, and two articles from Australia) and six articles from Ethiopia were included for this systematic review. Subsequently, all included papers were carefully reviewed to extract code and analyze the data.

In the first search of the electronic databases 1356 records were retrieved, and 1064 were excluded because they had not been carried out within the higher education context and/ or they were not sufficiently related to the research questions. The remaining 292 records were evaluated in more detail on the basis of their full texts. Of these, 257 records were discarded as they did not meet the inclusion criteria. Thus, in total, after appropriate sifting, 35 reviews were included in this systematic review. The study selection process is illustrated as follows in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Flowchart of Study Selection and Inclusion Process
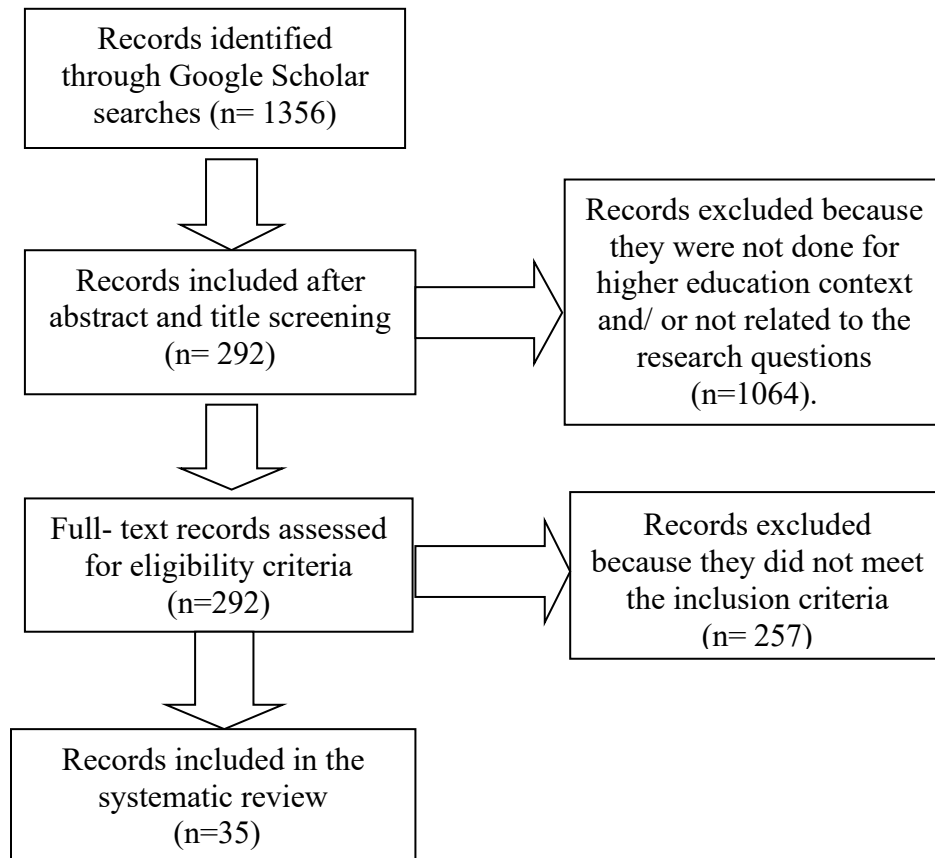
Results

Conceptualization of CPD in the Higher Education Context

The conceptualization of CPD varies across time and space. As defined by (Zeleke, 2012), the concept of CPD in different timelines shows a distinct change in focus. In the 1980s, developing knowledge, skills and attitudes of individual teachers were the major focuses. In the 1990s, authors expanded these to including students and schools or institutions in addition to emphasizing individual teachers' development. They contended that professional development is most effective, when a holistic approach is considered. From around 2000, writers about staff/professional development emphasized competence development as a broad concept which included the notions held by writers both in the 1980s and1990s. Specifically, the definitions in this decade considered skills, knowledge and attitude development as highly interwoven concepts with in an environment of teachers' satisfaction and motivation.

In the reviewed studies, CPD encompasses a wide range of conceptualizations. These include activities and interventions taken aimed at: improving knowledge, skills and attitudes of academics (Zeleke, 2012; Yilfashewa, 2012); improving academics performance (Ercan &

Ivanova, 2020; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015); meeting the needs of academics to be lifelong learners (Qader, 2019); helping academics in fulfilling their expected role in dynamic working situation and globalization (Hasan & Parvez, 2017; Ofojebe & Chukwuma, 2015; Yaqub et al., 2020); improving academics career competencies (Bacheler, 2015) developing skills of academics in technology application (Yue et al., 2016). CPD is also conceptualized as enhancing academics ability to reflect and analyze their experience in-depth, to develop and substantiate knowledge and to refresh and re- evaluate it (Colomer et al., 2020; Malik et al., 2015).

Besides, CPD is conceptualized as both product and process. It is conceived as a product because it includes activities like documenting the skills, knowledge and experience that academics gain both formally and informally as they work beyond their initial training (Shah & Mangrola, 2015). Scholars like Suwaed and Rahouma (2015) are against this conceptualization. They argue that CPD is not a discrete one-off event but rather an ongoing opportunity to discuss the challenges a professional community face and engage in a continuing reflective practice for every academic to learn throughout their career. Malik et al. (2015) also supported the conceptualization of CPD as a process rather than a product. They define it in the university context as a process of improving and increasing capability of academics to upgrade their content knowledge and educational skills. Based on this definition, it is expected that academics' skills will be strengthened during the process. The conceptualizations of CPD are reviewed in Table1.

Table 1

Conceptualization of Continuous professional development

Descriptions	Study
Traditional conceptualization of CPD includes activities like short term intensive in-house trainings that are often ad hoc and disjointed with the classroom context.	(Harpe & Mason, 2014; Yadeta & Assefa, 2017)
Contemporary conceptions of CPD give due emphasis to the dynamic nature of academics' learning within a community of professionals, which has resulted in workplace learning and strategies that include reflective practice, professional learning community, individualized professional growth plans, action research and inquiry, customized online learning and communities of practice.	(Agsonsua1 & Prasertphornl, 2020; Colomer et al., 2020; Jayatilleke & Mackie, 2012; Nair, 2015; Vanasschea & Kelchtermansa, 2015)
Conceptions of CPD as product includes activities like documenting the skills, knowledge and experience that academics gain both formally and informally as they work beyond their initial training.	(Shah & Mangrola, 2015).
Conceptions of CPD as process entail every opportunity of academics learning throughout their career through which they develop new knowledge, skills, abilities & strategies in competences areas & technology applications.	(Shibankova et. al, 2019; Suwaed & Rahouma, 2015; Yilfashewa, 2013; Yue et al., 2016)

Trends of CPD in Higher Education Context

The role of academics is shifting due to the theories and concepts about teaching and learning in higher education created at a specific period. So does the form, content focus, strategy and intended outcomes of professional development of academics. CPD encompasses a wide range of interventions and activities aimed at improving academics competency in their changing and different roles as scholars, advisors, designers and evaluators of academic programs, course academic leaders and contributors to public service, and participants in institutional decisions. And, it is utilized as a means to keep pace with the changing role of academics, to cope up with challenges that have resulted from high competition of attracting and retaining students in Western and Eastern countries; increased use of technology, and globalization (Bacheler, 2015; Lam, 2010). In order to accommodate the competency required for this changing role of academics, there is a growing body of literature which point out the fact that professional development needs to become more sophisticated (Harpe & Mason, 2014). Some contemporary trends, like the mass expansion of higher education, the spread of student-centered approaches and the growing importance of modern digital technologies also affect the conceptualization and trend of CPD (Santos et al., 2019).

Just like that of conceptualization of CPD, trends of CPD also entail using both traditional and newer or contemporary approaches. In the reviewed papers, CPD trends like intensive training that emphasize episodic events and certification are considered as traditional (Harpe & Mason, 2014). These traditional trends are viewed as insufficient in developing the professional teaching expertise of academics. On the other hand, contemporary trends entail activities that are continuous and situated in work: self- evaluated, self- managed and self- organized; learner centered; and if it provides opportunities to learn from others in a professional learning community (Harpe & Mason, 2014). The trends of CPD can be reviewed by their forms, content focus, strategies and intended outcomes as follows.

Table 2

Trends of Continuous Professional Development

Change in	Descriptions	Study
Form There is a growing body of literature that CPD should use different forms to develop academics' competency that playing their role requires.	Formal training like Induction and Higher Diploma program in Ethiopia or experiences such as attending workshops, refresher courses, professional meeting and mentoring etc.	(Biftu, 2017; Gebru, 2016; Fossøy & Haara1, 2016; Yadeta & Assefa, 2017; Yilfashewa, 2012; 2013).
	Informal professional learning that constitutes the learning undertaken on a daily basis embedded within the remit of fulfilling their role in the learning community. This includes, reading professional publications, watching television documentaries related to an academic discipline etc.	(Evans et al., 2020; Hasan & Parvez, 2017; MacPhail et al., 2018).

Change in	Descriptions	Study
Content focus There is a change in content focus- knowledge about the actual issue to be addressed via CPD.	Content knowledge refers knowledge about the actual subject matter that is to be taught.	(Berry, 2018; Fabriz et al., 2020; Hasan & Parvez, 2017; Mishra & Koehler, 2006; Ofojebe & Chukwuma, 2015; Sadovets, 2017).
	Pedagogical knowledge is about the processes and practices or methods of teaching and learning and it encompasses overall educational purposes, values, and aims. For instance: lesson planning, effective classroom communication skills, practices and management, exposure to various contemporary effective teaching methods and techniques, and leadership Training.	(Berry, 2018; Ofojebe & Chukwuma, 2015; Sadovets, 2017).
	Technological knowledge is about academics' knowledge of, and ability to use, various technologies, technological tools, and associated resources such as the Internet and digital video.	(Berry, 2018; Ofojebe & Chukwuma, 2015; Riviou et al., 2014).
Strategy There is change in strategies that are used as an approach to achieve the purpose of CPD.	Institutionalized activity like in- house training (induction and Higher Diploma program), workshops, conferences and seminars. Institutionalized activity like lesson study Institutionalized activity like feedback mechanism.	(Biftu, 2017; Gebru, 2016; Suwaed & Rahouma, 2015; Yilfashewa, 2012). (Yadeta &Assefa, 2017). (Shah & Mangrola, 2015).
	Application of technology (e- learning) to academics CPD enhances teachers' quality by contributing to their training. Blended learning is mix or blend of face-to-face, real-time learning and the use of online digital resources.	(Berry, 2018; Yue et al., 2016). (Bacheler, 2015; Evans et al., 2020; Harpe & Mason, 2014; Masoumi et al., 2019; Shah & Mangrola, 2015).
Intended outcome There is also a change in goals of CPD that are intended to be achieved upon engagement of CPD.	Enhancing competency of academics that enables them to survive in the current changing situation/environment demands accountability.	(Agsonsua1 & Prasertphorn1, 2020; Bacheler, 2015; Fabriz et al., 2020; Harpe & Mason, 2014; Masoumi et al., 2019; Yilfashewa, 2012; 2013).
	Enhancing the integration of technology in teaching and learning in educational setting is a means to enhance and ensure quality in higher education.	(Riviou et al., 2014; Yue et al., 2016). (Biftu, 2017; Zeleke, 2012; Gebru, 2016)

Challenges

The challenges that inhibit academics from participating in CPD exist on various levels ranging from individual academics' attitude to their respective institution and to the national policies that govern higher education. Based on this review, three main challenges have been

identified: 1) individual academic related challenges, 2) institutional related challenges and 3) policy related challenges. We have also made attempts to identify the underlying reasons for the prevalence of these challenges and to explain why they exist and bring in some possible solutions suggested in the literature. The challenges are summarized thematically as follows in Table 3.

Table 3

Challenges of Continuous Professional Development

Challenges	Description	Examples of Description
Individual academics related challenges	Lack of time for CPD endeavors.	(Bacheler, 2015; Berry, 2018; MacPhail et al., 2018; Mchete & Shayo, 2020).
	Mismatch between academics' need and CPD endeavors.	(Baker et al., 2018; Jayatilleke & Mackie, 2012; Qader, 2019; Yaqub et al., 2020; Yilfashewa, 2012)
Institutional related challenges	Lack of institutional support (follow up).	(Gebru,, 2016; Malik et al., 2015; Mchete & Shayo, 2020; Yadeta & Assefa, 2017; Yilfashewa, 2013)
	Demands of CPD are imposed by the different stakeholders (being donor- driven) like policy makers, institutions or institutional leaders.	(Zeleke, 2012; Gebru,2016)
	Lack of financial support.	(Bacheler, 2015; Masoumi et al., 2019; Mchete & Shayo, 2020; Ofojebe & Chukwuma, 2015)
	Absence of infrastructures required, resources, accountability and incentives for CPD endeavors.	(Jaramillo-Baquerizo et al., 2018; MacPhail et.al, 2018; Ofojebe & Chukwuma, 2015; Suwaed, & Rahouma, 2015; Yilfashewa, 2012).
	Inability of institutions to make CPD relevant to academics work life and higher education context and the training lacks content knowledge.	(Biftu,, 2017; Berry, 2018; Gebru,2016; Nair, 2015).
	Absence of organizational culture to learn together.	(Bacheler, 2015; MacPhail et.al, 2018; Yadeta & Assefa, 2017; Vanasschea & Kelchtermansa, 2015)
Policy related challenges	Absence of well-articulated policy.	(Masoumi et al., 2019; Yilfashewa, 2012)
	Lack of policy provision support for CPD endeavors. That is lack of financial, organizational, and institutional capacity to plan and implement, evaluate effective CPD at higher education context. Absence of well-established system for academics CPD.	(MacPhail et al., 2018; Masoumi et al., 2019; Qader, 2019).

Discussion

The purpose of this systematic review is to investigate and map out the conceptualizations, trends and challenges of CPD in the higher education context. This review work considers varied conceptualizations, trends and challenges of CPD in higher education context.

Conceptualization of CPD as processes is highly advocated by scholars like Guskey (2000) and Steward (2009). They note that in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning, professional development should be ongoing workplace learning which is long-term in focus and is practice-oriented and work-based to improve future practice and thus needs to be embedded in the process of critical reflection and evaluation of workloads (Guskey, 2000; Steward, 2009).

Conceptualizations of CPD in Ethiopia published works tend towards the traditional aspects. But, regarding professional development as restricted to special event like trainings or credits each year like induction and higher diploma programs, is a narrow view of professional development (Guskey, 2000). When educators view their task as meeting these time- based mandates, they tend to think of professional development in terms of "How can I get in my hours?" rather than, "What do I need to improve my practice, and how can I get it?" (Guskey, 2000, p.15).

The findings of this review paper illuminate the changing nature of form, content focus, strategy and intended outcomes of CPD. In the reviewed papers, the trends of CPD in relation to the content of CPD give due emphasis for cognitive and psychomotor domains (like content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and skills, and technological knowledge and skills). This implies that skills that are necessitated in 21st century are less emphasized. Twenty-first-century skills are conceptualized as abilities and attributes that can be taught or learned in order to enhance ways of thinking, learning, working and living in the world. The skills include creativity and innovation, critical thinking/problem solving/decision making, learning to learn/meta- cognition, communication, collaboration (teamwork), information literacy, ICT literacy, citizenship (local and global), life and career skills and personal and social responsibility (including cultural awareness and competence) (Binkley, 2012). In line with this, scholars like Hasan and Parvez (2017) support the inclusion of 21st century skills in professional development of academics in higher education. Furthermore, the affective domain which is concerned with the attitude and interest of academics about their professional role is also less emphasized.

The trend of CPD in relation to its strategies encompasses its multi-modal nature. In current trends, there is a break away from linear and time-constrained delivery or a solely face to face strategy. This is the main reason technological knowledge is included in the content of CPD and online and/or virtual modality is used as an alternative strategy. This is underpinned by the theoretical framework called Technological, Pedagogical, and Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework (Berry, 2018; Koehler & Mishra, 2009). Berry (2018) claims that quality professional development can help build instructors' technological, pedagogical and content knowledge.

The trend of CPD in relation to its outcomes include transmission of knowledge and skills to support specific educational practice, enhancing the integration of technology in teaching and learning, developing the competency of academics, and a means to ensure quality in higher education. This implies that continuous professional development is seen as "a service industry"

(Lovat, 2020, p. 1). It uses only instrumentalist approaches to professional learning of academics often serving the agendas of reformers, governments and policy makers, rather than preparing academics to develop holistically. Lovat (2020) provides systematic evidence that supports such holism. Emotionality, sociality, morality, spirituality and the aesthetic senses are not detachments from the learning experience of any learner: rather integral. Scholars, like Sutherland (2018) support this idea and attempt to inform academic developers to broaden their focus thereby take on a more holistic approach. In doing so, she urges academic developers to better understand and support the development of the whole of the academic role, which includes not only teaching duties, but also research, service, administration, and leadership.

Mismatch between academics' need and CPD endeavors is similarly an issue identified by this review. This finding agrees with adult learning theory that provides insights into how adults learn. Adults are motivated to learn from being in situations where they see a need to learn (Knowles, 2005). Since academics are self-directed adults, their learning settings should begin with topics that address their current learning needs.

All reviewed papers in common highlight that lack of time for CPD endeavors is the major challenge of academics to engage themselves in CPD endeavors. It will be valuable for future research to investigate what activities academics prioritize to the expense of their professional development and why academics are committed to these prioritized activities.

Besides, the analysis of this review revealed that there are also institution related challenges like lack of institutional support, infrastructure requirements, accountability and incentives for CPD endeavors. From these findings a clear suggestion emerges that there is a need for systems that plan, provide resources, implement and follow up CPD activities in higher education. In addition, policy related challenges like lack of policy provision support for CPD endeavors inhibit academics from engaging in CPD endeavors. This fact is highlighted by the study conducted across six national jurisdictions including England, Ireland, Israel, Norway, Scotland and The Netherlands (MacPhail et al., 2018). It is therefore imperative that ways of facilitating and incentivizing CPD are pursued. This could include making more time available; linking CPD to career progression; exploring ways to use CPD to work more efficiently and effectively so as to make it seem a worthwhile investment of time and focus and improving overall performance also led to career progression and extra opportunities.

Conclusion and Implications

The analysis of this systematic review has provided valuable insights into the conceptualizations, trends and challenges of continuous professional development in higher education context. This review reveals that there are varied conceptualizations of CPD in higher education context. The trends of CPD in higher education therefore vary in form, content focus, strategy and expected outcomes. The challenges that hinder academics from engaging in CPD seem to exist on various levels: from individual academics' attitudes to their respective institution and to the national policies that govern higher education.

This study has far-reaching implications for future actions on the CPD of academics in higher education context. For instance, in those countries where CPD is conceptualized traditionally, the emphasis is only on formal training; there is a need to re-conceptualize it again as an iterative cumulative continuous process of reflective praxis by self-directed learners in dynamic learning communities. Since academics are adults, continuous professional development of academics should be governed by principles of adult learning theory. This andragogic approach positions learners as self-directed and continually reflective practitioners who see CPD and other learning not just as discrete courses or hours to be undertaken (CPD as product), but as applications to real world deeply embedded scenarios in the contexts of learning institutions. They can not only apply this learning but adapt it in dialogue with other professionals, learners and communities they serve, thus setting up a continuous dialogue of learning and development.

In relation to content of CPD, the topics need to be in line with academics' current learning needs. In this regard, it should include 21st century skills and should aim to bring about holistic development of academics. Normally, this will initially involve dedicated time and discrete modules, but with a culture of change that sees these discrete hours as the launch pad for lifelong continuous learning from the beginning. In realizing this culture change itself must be explicitly taught, debated, discussed, honed and improved upon.

Due emphasis should also be given to outcomes related to the affective domain which is concerned with the attitude and interest of academics about their professional role. As argued above in the final paragraph of the discussion section, this should include both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation including possible links to pay, time off and career progression. Furthermore, policy makers and institutional managers should provide adequate resources to CPD endeavors. Well established systems that plan, implement and follow up CPD activities of academics in higher education should be developed.

In our view, CPD shouldn't be confined to a discrete course for a particular form of training but rather be 'continuous' as its name implies, embedded in and reflect up on practice across various sectors and across careers and geared towards developing the professionals as better enablers of learning for the students and the communities they serve. This act moves CPD from a product model of hours completed to a process model of practice improved. This will of course increase buy-in for teachers as they see their students' grades improve, but it is also an essential component of cultural change and capacity building. In this sense, it is a paradigm shift to seeing teachers and educators as well as the learners they serve as active knowledge creators involved in a dialogic process of imaginative production.

Furthermore, the researchers believe that with regards to conceptualizations, trends and challenges of CPD in higher education context this study provides some useful evidence and ways forward, whilst acknowledging that further and more detailed studies in relation to its practices and effects on higher education competitiveness, academics competitiveness and students learning are necessary.

Finally, the Ethiopian reviewed papers appear to be limited to the Higher Diploma Program (HDP), which seems to be a narrow view of professional development (Guskey, 2000). The

practices and challenge of continuous professional development for academics in the Ethiopian context beyond the Higher Diploma Program (HDP) needs further research.

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Examining Employability Skills Acquisition of Students in Some Ethiopian Universities through Legitimation Code Theory

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to understand the underlying principles of the acquisition of employability skills in some public Ethiopian Universities. Data were collected from 394 graduating students in the year 2021 from three Ethiopian Public Universities- Addis Ababa University, Arsi University, and Bahir Dar University. The study used Legitimation Code Theory to analyze the acquisition of employability skills. A questionnaire adapted from Maton and Howard (2016) was used to reveal legitimation codes underlying practices of employability skills acquisition. Another set of questions adopted from Nebraska University Transferable skills assessment was used to measure employability skills of students. Analysis of data was conducted using both mean and linear regression. The findings of the study revealed that all the four dimensions of specialization codes (knowledge, knower, élite, and relativist codes) are evident in the universities with regard to different sets of employability skills. The regression analysis has shown that employability skills of students can be explained by their legitimation codes.

Introduction

Ever since Dearing's report (1997) on higher education in the learning society, employability became an agenda of higher education in the UK and internationally (Bridges, 2000; Hinchliffe, 2008). Since then, different employability definitions and frameworks have been developed. In all employability frameworks, employability skills are considered important, and different definitions have been forwarded. According to Singh et al. (2014), employability skills are one of the two factors in the employability equation, the other being hard skills or technical skills. Knight and Yorke (2003, p.5) defined employability as "a set of achievements—skills, understanding, and personal attributes—that make individuals more likely to gain employment

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and be successful in their chosen occupations". Their view of employability emphasized the importance of subject-specific understanding, generic social skills, meta-cognition, and self-theories. McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) also contributed to the discourse by analyzing the historical application of the term "employability. They argued that employability is derived and affected by both individual characteristics and broader social factors that influence one's capacity to get a job. Tomlinson (2012) raised the issue of supply-side critics about employability. No matter how hard universities attempt to develop graduates' employability skills, it may not automatically lead to graduate employment. Nevertheless, a great deal of responsibility is laid upon Higher Education Institutions by supply-side approaches to increase graduate employability.

According to Lowden et al. (2011) employability skills are needed by almost everyone to do a job. For Lowden et al., employability skills enable individuals to utilize the more specific knowledge and technical skills that are needed in specific workplaces. Earlier, the term "employability skills" was used to refer to those skills which are vocational and job-specific. Nowadays, the term became broad enough to include a variety of attributes, work habits, and workplace success. They are skills that are needed not only in the workplace but also in daily living and social contexts. Further, employability skills are part of broader discourse premises around the need to provide greater linkages between the education community and the employment community (Kwok, 2003). One of the reasons why employability skills are valued is because they apply to many careers and also help to meet the needs of varieties of occupations (Saterfiel & Mc Larty, 1995). According to the Allen Consulting Group Report (2006, p.11), employability skills are also known by the name "key skills, core skills, life skills, key competencies, necessary skills, and transferable skills." In this study, these terminologies are used interchangeably.

There is lack of conceptual and theoretical frameworks for employability skills (Barrie, 2012); and the concept is undertheorized (Bester et al., 2018). This has made the issue partly a concern of epistemology. Brown and Hesketh (as cited in Tomlinson, 2008) showed that employers are becoming less interested in academic credentials and more interested in the personal attributes and skills of graduates. However, this preference comes with some drawbacks. Green and associates (2009) also point out that there is significant confusion about the definition and implementation of generic graduate skills. The nebulous nature of generic employability skills may have led to the problem of their acquisition. Holmes (1998) doubts the very notion of transferable key skills and the methodologies allegedly distinguished to develop them. Canning (2013) also stated that the idea of generic graduate skills has grown fuzzy, and the literature is simply advocatory—describing their importance than defining what constitutes them or how they are acquired. Hence, there is a wide gap in understanding the underlying principles behind employability skills acquisition by graduates of higher education.

Current Discourse on Employability Skills in Ethiopia

The global nature of higher education and the drastic expansion of universities in Ethiopia invited employability skills to become the country's agenda. A recent discourse from the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (MoE) raised the issue of graduate employability as a new means of regulating university success. MoE (2017) stated that 80% of university graduates have to be

employed within a year. The Ethiopian Higher Education Quality and Relevance Association (HERQA, 2013) also listed the institutional generic aim of a Bachelor's Degree program. The employability skills mentioned include competence in the field of study, creativity, innovativeness, sensitivity, and responsiveness towards community, culture, and environment, problem-solving skills, teamwork and communication skills, leadership skills, entrepreneurial skills, ICT, and lifelong learning (p. 4). Our study adopted the employability skills framework developed by American Research Institute, AIR (2015), because of its clarity in the categorization of the skills. The framework categorizes employability skills into three broad domains: applied knowledge, effective relationships, and workplace skills. Applied knowledge comprises critical thinking skills and applied academic skills. Effective relationship embraces interpersonal skills and personal qualities such as flexibility. Workplace skills include resource management, information use, communication skills, systems thinking, and technology use.

Empirically, little is known about the practice of employability skill acquisition in Ethiopian universities. There is a lack of evidence on which employability skills are acquired by students and how. To what extent Ethiopian university instructors embed employability skills in their courses is also not known, and the organizing principles underlying the acquisition of employability skills are not clear. The studies conducted in Ethiopia and most studies elsewhere on graduate employability focus on assessing graduate outcomes. Graduate outcome studies, such as tracer studies, usually measure what happens after students finish their programs and graduate. Such studies may divert the energy from efforts to develop graduates' employability skills (Harvey, 2001; Knight & Yorke, 2003. Employability measures should emphasize the overall experience of students in the development of employability attributes. This can indicate where the process can be improved (Harvey, 2001).

In addition, the different studies conducted on employability lacked a way to see how employability skills are thought to be developed by university students. The studies lack a theoretical framework through which the mechanisms behind employability skills acquisitions are revealed. This study is based on the premise that analyzing employability skills acquisition using Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) can help identify the organizing principles underlying employability skills acquisition. It investigated employability skills acquisition in three Ethiopian public universities using the Legitimation Code Theory as a guiding conceptual framework.

Conceptual Framework: Legitimation Code Theory (LCT)

Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) is a multi-disciplinary conceptual framework developed by Maton (2014). The framework draws insight from philosophy, linguistics, physics, anthropology, cultural studies, and, more directly, sociology. Maton (2014) specially built on Pierre Bourdieu's "field theory" and Basil Bernstein's "Code theory." Bourdieu (1996) introduced the concept of "a new gaze" or a "sociological eye" that goes beyond what is immediately observed in fragmentation and adopts a holistic view of the social world. According to Maton (2016a), such gaze involves "a break with thinking in terms of separate and visible empirical entities in favor of a realist and relational mode that conceives phenomena as realizations of underlying organizing principles" (p. 6).

Bernstein (1964) on the other hand, popularized two types of language codes—restricted and elaborate codes—which he used to explain differences in language use between learners from different social classes. Bernstein observed that learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds use restricted codes which depend on background knowledge and shared understanding they gain through their socialization process; whereas, learners from middle-class backgrounds use both restricted and elaborate codes. The use of elaborate codes does not assume the presence of prior knowledge and understanding, and therefore, spells everything out thoroughly without condensing meaning and expressions.

Maton (2014; 2016a; 2016b) combined Bourdieu's Field Theory and Bernstein's Code Theory to develop the Legitimation Code Theory (LCT). LCT goes beyond the two sociological theories to apply Code Theory to diversified fields and practices than just pedagogy or language. LCT also adopts a relational view of codes instead of assuming a segmentalist stance when studying separate phenomena under a sociological "gaze."

Ingold and O'Sullivan (2017) state that LCT observes the world and inquires about how people in various aspects of their lives use and teach information to others. According to Maton (2016a), Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) provides a collection of concepts that are used in empirical research to explain problems. LCT assumes that actors affirm legitimacy for what they are doing or for the organizing principles embodied by their actions. In every period, within every intellectual field, practices are underpinned by implicit organizing principles which give legitimacy to actors and their claims of what counts as realizations of valid knowledge.

When applied to higher education, Clarence (2016) affirms that Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) is a framework with strong explanatory power in its ability to conceptualize disciplines in terms of both knowledge and knowers. The tools it offers can help both academic development practitioners and disciplinary educators to analyze and change pedagogical practice in higher education. Maton (2016b) argues that for almost half a century, social constructivism has subjugated the field of sociology of education in the appearance of the theories, such as critical theories, post-theories, progressivism, constructivism, and so on. Studies of psychological and sociological approaches in educational research have undoubtedly contributed a great deal to educational thinking and are highly important. Nevertheless, studying only either knowing or knowers limits the variety of positions actors see as legitimate within educational research, and, consequently, what is fundamentally missing will be the study of knowledge itself (Howard & Maton, 2011). Maton (2014) further argues educational research and policy have not considered research into knowledge as an object (what is being learned) as the fundamental knowledge base of educational research and policy.

Our study explored the organizing principles underlying employability skill acquisition using the Legitimation Code Theory. Several reasons make researching employability skill acquisition using Legitimation Code Theory important. The first reason is conducting educational research using LCT helps to fill the 'knowledge blindness' gap by analyzing relations university students make within knowledge, it is possible to identify rules of the game about employability skill acquisition which might inform policy-making concerning employability skill acquisition in the Ethiopian Higher Education context. The second reason is related to its contribution to

knowledge building; studies that are done using LCT contribute to the improvement of the framework itself because LCT is an emerging framework. The third reason is employability skill acquisition is a current important agenda in the Ethiopian context because the massification of higher education is producing a huge number of graduates every year making the labor market very competitive. Due to the excess supply of labor, the acquisition of employability skills by graduates is very important for success in the competitive labor market. Research on employability skill acquisition in the Ethiopian context is scant, and there are no studies that address graduate employability skills by assessing Ethiopian Higher education using Legitimation Code Theory as a framework. We hope this study contributes to filling this gap.

Legitimation Code Theory has five dimensions: Specialization, Semantics, Autonomy, Temporality, and Density. Of all these dimensions, specialization is the first developed and more elaborated dimension. It is also used more in studies. Specialization as a dimension of LCT understands practices following a knowledge-knower structure. The concept of specialization "begins from the simple premise that practices are about or oriented towards something and by someone" (Maton, 2016a, p. 13). As in any educational practice, employability skills practice could be affected by the conceptions that actors have about employability skills acquisition. The dimension mainly offers a chance to analyze what students think as valid employability skills and how they define their relationship with the employability skill.

Figure 1

The Specialization Plane (Maton, 2016a, p. 13)
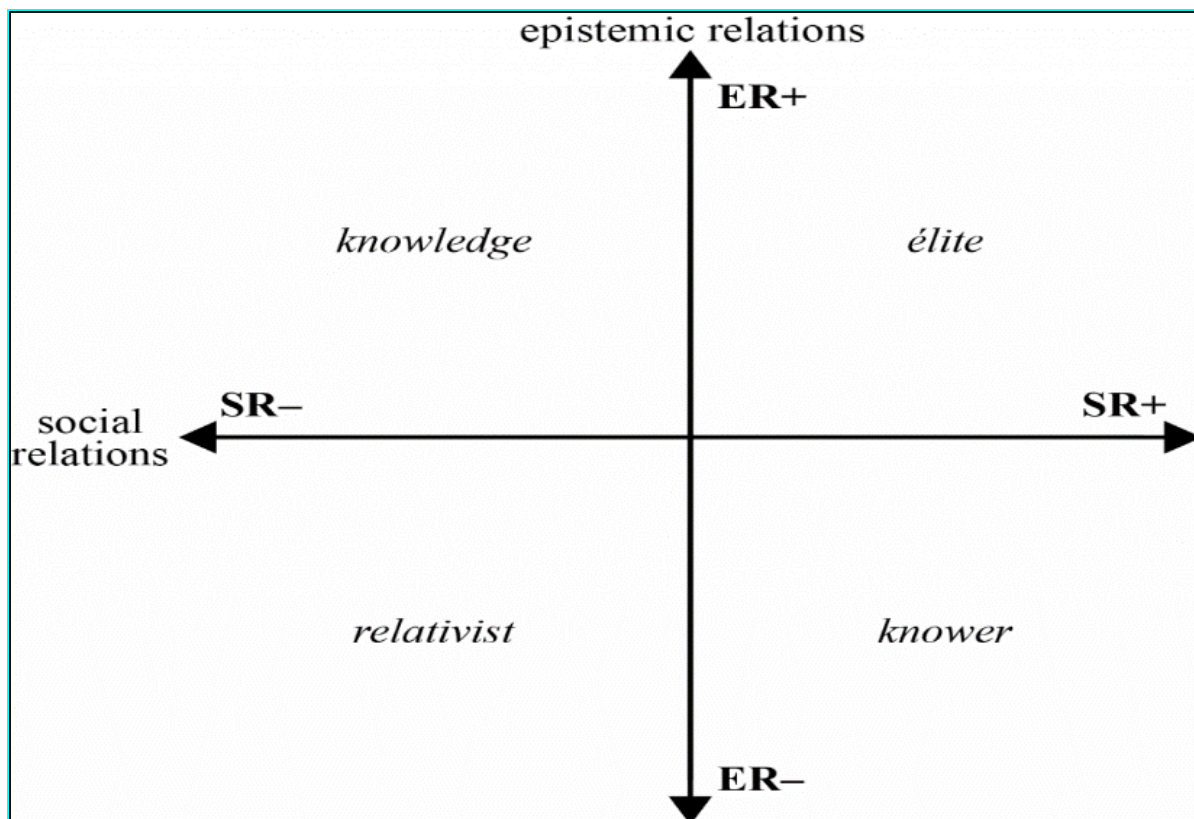
The specialization dimension offers analysis through epistemic and social relations. Maton (2016a, p. 12-13) distinguished between the two as follows: "Epistemic relations (ER) refers to the relationship between practices and their object (the part of the world towards which they are oriented); and social relations (SR) between practices and their subject, author, or actor (who is enacting the practices)". Depending on how strongly (+) or weakly (-) each relation is emphasized as the legitimate basis of practice, beliefs, and identity, four types of specialization codes are generated (ER+, ER-, SR+, and SR-). As shown in Figure 1, these continua of strengths can be visualized as axes on a specialization plane, their quadrants indicating four principal modalities: knowledge codes, knower codes, élite codes, and relativist codes. Maton (2016a) described them as follows.

> Knowledge codes (ER+, SR−), are where possession of specialized knowledge, principles or procedures concerning specific objects of study is emphasized as the basis of achievement, and the attributes of actors are downplayed; Knower codes (ER−, SR+), are where specialized knowledge and objects are downplayed and the attributes of actors are emphasized as measures of achievement, whether viewed as born (e.g. 'natural talent'), cultivated (e.g. 'taste') or social (e.g. feminist standpoint theory); Élite codes (ER+, SR+), are where legitimacy is based on both possessing specialist knowledge and being the right kind of knower; and Relativist codes (ER−, SR−), are where legitimacy is determined by neither specialist knowledge nor knower attributes – 'anything goes (pp. 13-14).

Specialization codes conceptualize rules of the game embodied in employability skill acquisition, practice, disposition, and contexts. So, what matters in the four codes about employability skills acquisition could be the knowledge about employability skills (knowledge code), the students (knower code), or both (elite code), or neither (relativist code). According to Maton (2014) specific code may be evident as the basis of achievement but may not be transparent, there may be code clashes and struggles by actors over which code is dominant. The dominant code may change for example between subject areas. These code shifts change the "rules of the game". Therefore, the specialization code tries to identify which relation is emphasized in knowledge and educational contexts. The specific code which represents the unwritten "rule of the game" dominates every educational practice and context.

Hence, identifying these codes in employability skill acquisition practice in Ethiopian Universities provides a basis for a better understanding of the process of employability skill acquisition. For this purpose, this study is organized under the following research questions: (1) what Legitimation Code is predominant in some Ethiopian Universities concerning employability skills acquisition? (2) to what extent does the legitimation code of students explain their employability skills?

Methods

The paradigm of this research is critical realism which views reality as complex. Critical realism recognizes the role of both agency and structural factors in influencing human behavior.

Critical realism articulates that the mechanisms and events exist independently of our knowledge. According to Shannon-Baker (2016), critical realism tries to understand the relationship between factors by investigating context-based causality. It does this by examining the underlying factors that are potentially responsible for the social and physical phenomenon.

The study used a cross-sectional survey design of a quantitative research approach. Data were collected from 394 graduating students in the year 2021 from three Ethiopian Universities using a questionnaire.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The target population for the study was graduating students from public universities in Ethiopia in the year 2021. Samples of the study were drawn from students who were graduating from Addis Ababa University, Arsi University, and Bahir Dar University in the year 2021. A total of 394 students were drawn using a stratified random sampling method from each university using the institutions as strata. Accordingly, 188 (from 3910 graduating) students from Bahir Dar, 115 (from 2420) students of Addis Ababa, and 91 (from 1924) students of Arsi University were included.

Data Collection Instrument

Data was collected using a questionnaire adapted from Maton and Howard (2016). They evolved a questionnaire for unfolding legitimation codes for specialization dimension in the context of technology integration for secondary education. The questionnaire for this research adopted the options that are used to unfold specialization codes of a given practice, not the main items. Research participants were asked what things are important about employability skills acquisition using a questionnaire with 32 items to explore the underlying principles dominating employability skills practice. Each question was provided with four options through which one can reveal the legitimation code underlying a given employability skill.

The overall reliability of the items that measure both the epistemic and social relation of the knowledge practice that measure the Legitimation code of university students was α=.91 which was a very good reliability measure. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Sample of Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity of questionnaire measuring Legitimation Code of Students' Employability Skills, was KMO= 0.84, which indicates that patterns of relationships are relatively compact, therefore, factor analysis yields distinct and reliable factors. Consequently, factor analysis is appropriate for this data. Bartlett's test of sphericity also shows a value of <0.001 significance which indicates that there are some relationships between the variables we hoped to include in the analysis. The question items which were intended to measure the status of employability skills of university graduates were adopted from the Transferable skills assessment of Nebraska University. The adopted 44 items in the tool measure verbal communication skills, written communication skills, problem solving/critical thinking skills, analytical/research skills, planning and organization skills, interpersonal/ customer relation skills, leadership skills, quantitative/technology skills, creativity and innovation skills, team and collaborative skills. The skills were measured on a five-

point Likert scale ranging from not skilled to highly skilled. The Cronbach alpha reliability of the items that measure the status of students' employability skills was α= .94. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Sample of Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity of questionnaire measuring employability skills of graduates KMO= 0.92, which indicates that patterns of relationships are relatively compact, therefore, factor analysis yields distinct and reliable factors. Consequently, factor analysis is appropriate for this data. Bartlett's test of sphericity also shows a value of <0.001 significance which indicates that there are some relationships between the variables we hoped to include in the analysis. Analysis of data was made using SPSS v25 through mean and linear regression.

Data Analysis Technique and Procedures

A grand mean and mean scores for each dimension of employability were calculated using SPSS v 25. To reveal legitimation codes, the difference between the grand mean and individual mean was used. A grand mean was calculated by averaging all the different sets of employability skills. Individual means were calculated by adding together two items for each set of employability skills. Each set of employability skills has two items for measuring *epistemic relation* and two items for measuring *social relation*. To reveal the *social relation* that students have with the practice of employability skills, the mean of two items was added together to form one single mean. To reveal *epistemic relation* the same strategy of adding the means of two items was used to get one single mean for each employability skills dimension. The difference between the grand mean and individual mean for each set of employability skills was used to plot the legitimation codes on the Cartesian plane. The difference between the grand mean and individual mean for items that measure epistemic relation was used to plot the y-axis on the Cartesian plane. The difference between the grand mean and individual mean for items that measure social relation was used to plot the x-axis on the Cartesian plane. A simple linear regression was conducted to predict the perceived employability skills of graduates using their legitimation codes.

Results

The main purpose of this study was to find out the Legitimation Codes underlying employability skills acquisition in three Ethiopian public universities. Accordingly, the collected data is presented and interpreted as follows. First, the mean scores and standard deviation (SD) of the data about the legitimate code of university students are presented, followed by the regression analysis.

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the mean *epistemic relation* students have on different dimensions of employability skills. According to Maton (2000), epistemic relation is the relation between educational knowledge and its proclaimed object of study (that part of the world of which knowledge is claimed) (p. 154). In this case, it refers to the relation between concepts, theories, and procedures learned in a course and employability skills.

Students were asked how important learning content knowledge, theory, and concepts are in different courses. They were also asked about the importance of learning skills and procedures

in different courses for the acquisition of different sets of employability skills. The questionnaire was a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1=, *not at all important*, 2= *not very important*, 3= *somewhat important*, and 4= *very important*.

Table 1

Epistemic Relation Mean of students on different Dimensions of Employability Skills

Employability Skills	Mean	Std. Deviation
Critical thinking skill	3.5205	.59665
Problem Solving skill	3.4679	.57553
Resource Management skill	3.3026	.72647
Interpersonal skill	3.2028	.74605
Academic skill	3.5344	.60112
Flexibility skill	3.3265	.68916
Communication skill	3.3708	.67849
Skill of information use	3.3508	.67189
Skill of Technology use	3.4331	.65100
Grand Mean for Epistemic Relation	3.3922	.43297

Table 1 above shows the mean of the students' responses on items that are supposed to reveal *epistemic relation* students have towards the acquisition of employability skills. As the table shows, the means of the students' responses on *epistemic relation* of the different skills are: critical thinking skills (*M*= 3.52, *SD*= 0.59), problem-solving skills (*M*=3.47, *SD*=0.57), resource management skills such as time management, money management, material and personnel management (*M*= 3.30, *SD*=0.71), interpersonal skill such as teamwork, leadership, respecting individual differences (*M*=3.20, *SD*=0.75), academic skill such as reading, writing, mathematical strategies and scientific principles (*M*=3.53, *SD*=0.60), personal quality skills such as flexibility, working independently, willingness to learn, integrity, professionalism (*M*=3.33, *SD*=0.69), communication skill such as verbal communication, communication in writing, comprehending written material, active listening, and careful observation (*M*=3.37, *SD*=0.68), skill of information use such as locating, organizing, using, analyzing, and communicating information (*M*=3.35, *SD*=0.67), and skill of technology use (*M*=3.43, *SD*=0.65).

The following table shows the mean for plotting *epistemic relation;* this data was generated by calculating the difference between individual means and the grand mean. According to Maton and Howard (2016), plots are determined by subtracting individual *epistemic relation* means from the grand *epistemic relation* means calculated for the y-axis. The y-plots categorize location of *epistemic relation* on the specialization plane.

Table 2

Epistemic Relation Mean to be plotted

Employability Skills	Mean	Std. Deviation
Critical Thinking Skill	-.1301	.59665
Problem Solving Skill	-.0775	.57553
Resource Management Skill	.0878	.72647
Interpersonal Skill	.1876	.74605
Academic Skill	-.1440	.60112
Flexibility Skill	.0639	.68916
Communication Skill	.0196	.67849
Skill of Information Use	.0396	.67189
Skill of Technology Use	-.0427	.65100

The means calculated in Table 2 are used to plot the y- axis on the Cartesian plane to create the legitimation codes. The mean plot on the y-axis for critical thinking was (y= -0.13), for problem-solving skills (y= -0.08), for resource management (y=0.09), for interpersonal skills (y=0.19), for academic skills (y=-0.14), for flexibility (y=0.06), for communication skills (y=0.19), for the skills of information use (y=0.04), and skills of technology use (y=-0.04).

Table 3 below shows the descriptive statistics for the mean of *social relation*s students have on different dimensions of employability skills. According to Maton (2000), *social relation* is the relation between educational knowledge and its subject. In the context of this study, *social relation* is the relation between students and employability skills.

Table 3

Social Relation Mean for different Dimensions of Employability Skills

Employability Skills	Mean	Std. Deviation
Critical thinking Skill	3.4923	.53941
Problem Solving skill	3.4182	.58481
Resource management	3.2987	.62396
Interpersonal skill	3.4452	.56670
Academic skill	3.2832	.65660
Flexibility Skill	3.3878	.61432
Communication skill	3.3721	.65668
Skill of information use	3.3128	.61449
Skill of technology use	3.3089	.61382
Grand Mean for Social Relation	3.3688	.40158

The mean of the students' response on items that are supposed to reveal *social relations* students have towards the acquisition of employability skills are presented in Table 3 above. Students were asked how important having natural talent and having personal experience are for the acquisition of different sets of employability skills. The questionnaire had a 4-point Likert

scale ranging from 1= *not at all important*, 2= *not very important*, 3= *somewhat important*, and 4= *very important*. As Table 3 above shows, the means of the students' response on *social relation* with respect to the skills were as follows : critical thinking skills (*M*= 3.49, *SD*= 0.54), problem solving skills (*M*=3.42, *SD*=0.58), resource management skill such as time management, money management, material and personnel management (*M*= 3.30, *SD*=0.62), interpersonal skills such as teamwork, leadership, respecting individual differences (*M*=3.44, *SD*=0.57), academic skill such as reading, writing, mathematical strategies and scientific principles (*M*=3.28, *SD*=0.66), personal quality skills such as flexibility, working independently, willingness to learn, integrity, professionalism (*M*=3.38, *SD*=0.61), communication skill such as verbal communication, communication in writing, comprehension of written material, active listening, and careful observation (*M*=3.37, *SD*=0.66) , skill of information use such as locating, organizing, using, analyzing, and communicating information (*M*=3.31, *SD*=0.61), and skill of technology use (*M*=3.30, *SD*=0.61).

Table 4 shows the mean for plotting *social relation.* This data was generated by calculating the difference between individual and grand means of social relation. According to Maton and Howard (2016), social relation plots are determined by subtracting individual *social relation* means from the grand means of *social relations* and calculated for the x-axis. The x-plots categorize their location on the specialization plane.

Table 4

Social Relation Mean to be Plotted for Different set of Employability Skills

Employability Skills	Mean	Std. Deviation
Critical Thinking	-.1202	.53941
Problem Solving	-.0461	.58481
Resource Management	.0734	.62396
Interpersonal skill	-.0731	.56670
Academic skill	.0889	.65660
Flexibility	-.0157	.61432
Communication Skill	.0000	.65668
Skill of Information Use	.0593	.61449
Skill of Technology Use	.0632	.61382

The means calculated in Table 4 are used to plot the x-axis on the Cartesian plane to form the legitimation codes. The mean plot on the x-axis for critical thinking was (*x*= - 0.12), for problem-solving skills (*x*= -0.05), for resource management (*x*=0.07), for interpersonal skills (*x*= -0.07), for academic skills (*x*=-0.09), for flexibility (*x*= -0.02), for communication skills (*x*= .00), for the skill of information use (*x*= 0.06), and for the skill of technology use (*x*=0.06).

The x and y values calculated in Table 2 and Table 4 were used to plot legitimation codes on a Cartesian plane that produces a specialization plane of Legitimation codes. This is done along the four codes: knowledge codes, elite codes, knower codes, and relativist codes. As discussed in

the "Conceptual Framework" section, the knowledge code (ER+/SR-) emphasizes possession of specialized knowledge, and the attributes of actors are downplayed, knower code (ER-/SR+) emphasizes the attribute of actors by downplaying specialized knowledge, the elite code (ER+/SR+) is based on possessing both specialist knowledge and being the right kind of knower, and relativist code (ER-/SR-) is determined by neither specialist knowledge nor attributes actors involved in practices. Maton (2016a) asserts that specialization code conceptualizes "rules of the game" embodied in employability skill acquisition, practice, disposition, and contexts. So what matters in the acquisition of employability skills from the four codes listed above could be the learning knowledge, concepts, theories, skills, and procedures in different courses (knowledge code), the attributes, talents, and personal experiences of students (knower code), both (élite code), or neither the knowledge nor the attributes or talents of students (relativist code). The following figure shows the legitimation code of the students.

Figure 2

Specialization Plane showing Legitimation Code of Students on Employability Skills
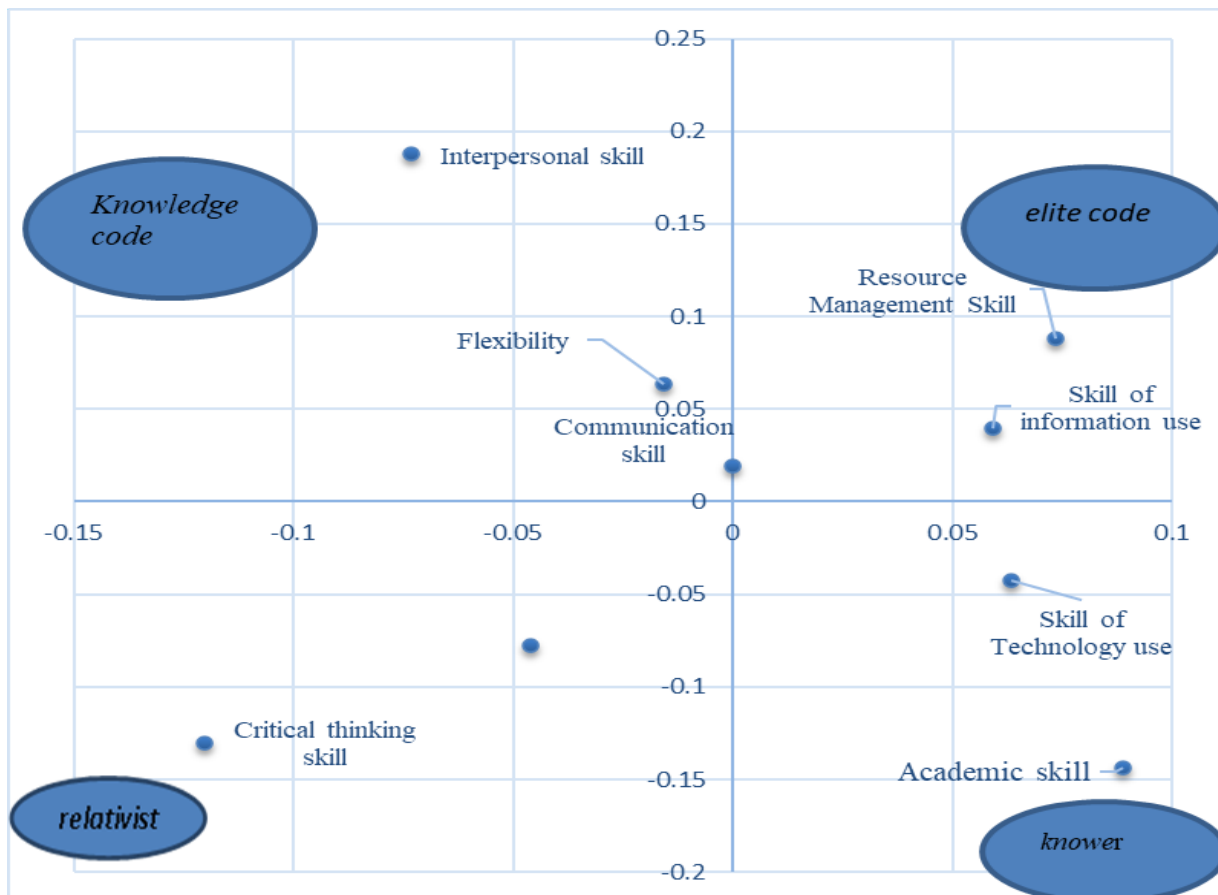
The finding of the study shows that students have knowledge code (ER+/SR-) on interpersonal skills and flexibility skills. Having a knowledge code on flexibility and interpersonal skill shows that students are downplaying *social relation* by considering the talent and the disposition that students have toward flexibility and interpersonal skills as unnecessary for the

acquisition of the skills. Students have *elite code* (ER+/SR+) for resource management skills and skill of information use. This shows that both skills and knowledge learned in different courses as well as students' talents are considered important in the acquisition of resource management skills and skills of information use. Students have a *knower code* (ER-/SR+) for the skill of technology use and academic skill. This means the talent that students have about the skill of technology use and academic skills is considered an important basis of achievement, whereas, the skill and knowledge learned in different courses are downplayed for the acquisition of employability skills. Students have a relativist code (ER-/SR-) for critical thinking and problem-solving skill, showing that students have an attitude of "anything goes" with the acquisition of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. They did not emphasize either the talent of students or the knowledge and skills learned in different courses as the basis of achievement for employability skills acquisition. Communication skills lay in between knower code and élite code.

Regression Analysis of Legitimation Code Theory

The other purpose of this study was to examine the prediction of students' legitimate code on their employability skills. Linear regression analysis was done to see the extent of prediction of the independent variable (legitimation code of students) over the dependent variable (perceived employability skills of students).

Table 5

Regression Statistics of Overall Legitimation Codes on Perceived Employability Skills of Students

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients B	R^2	Coefficients	t-statistic	P- value
Overall Legitimation Code	1.572(Constant) .554	.102	.323	6.719	.000

Overall legitimation skill of students significantly predicted their perceived competence of employability skills b = 1.572, $t(388) = 6.04$, $p < .05$. Overall legitimation code of students explains 10.2% of the variation in perceived competence of employability skills of students $R^2 = .102$, $F(1, 388) = 45.14$, $p < .05$. The overall legitimation code is statistically significant in explaining the employability skills of students at p<0.05. The following is the model for understanding the employability skills of students. Employability skills of students = 1.572 + 0.554 (overall legitimation code). As the mean of the overall legitimation code increases by 1, the overall employability skills of students increase by 0.554. The more students have élite code the better their employability skills.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand the underlying principles behind employability skills acquisition. We examined the legitimation codes of graduating students on different sets of employability skills by analyzing the social relation and epistemic relation they have using the

specialization dimension of Legitimation Code Theory. The study provides primary evidence on the underlying organizing principles (Legitimation Codes) behind the practice of employability skills acquisition.

Students' epistemic belief about employability skills, when conceptualized from the perspective of the specialization dimension of LCT, could be their belief whether: employability skills are related to personal talents and experiences of students and best developed by students themselves (knower code), or their epistemic belief that employability skills should be taught through the concepts and theories in the curriculum (knowledge code), or both a belief that employability skills are personal talents and experiences, and at the same time should be developed through the concepts and theories in the curriculum (élite code), or neither of these beliefs (relativist code). The findings of the study showed that students do not expect that developing their employability skills is the responsibility of the classroom teaching-learning process except for some skills such as interpersonal skills and personal qualities such as flexibility. This finding is surprising because those seemingly requiring personal talents and experiences, such as interpersonal skills and flexibility, were found to have a knowledge code (ER+/SR-) that legitimizes the importance of developing the skills through learning contents, theories, skills, and procedures in different courses. Whereas, the academic skill was found to have a knower code (ER-/SR+), which legitimizes the importance of personal talent and experience in employability skills acquisition.

Based on literature reviews, one may hypothesize that university instructors and students should have a knowledge code on different employability skills by taking into consideration the importance of learning concepts, theories, skills, and procedures in courses as important for the development of employability skills. In line with this, some researchers explicitly emphasize a knowledge code. For example, Suleman (2016) stated that higher education is demanded to prepare graduates for the world of work, and universities are expected to meet standards on employability. Wiley (2014) states that employability is an ongoing and contemporary worry for Higher Education Institutions. Embedding employability into the heart of higher education will continue to be a key precedence of governments, universities, colleges, and employers; the consequence of which will bring both significant national benefits, signifying higher education's broader role in contributing to economic growth as well as its vital role in social and cultural development (HEFCE, cited in Pegg et al., 2012). Knight and Yorke (2003) argue entrenching employability skills in the undergraduate curriculum is an acknowledgment that universities and the needs of employers are compatible. They illustrated that different studies have shown degree programs afford the development of employability skills. The literatures imply that employability skills should have a knowledge code. They emphasize the importance of learning concepts, theories, skills, and procedures in courses as the basis of achievement for employability skills acquisition.

Unsurprisingly then, there seems to exist a code clash between what the literature says about the expectation of the development of employability skills and the legitimation code of university students. What the literature expects to be the practice of employability skills acquisition and what university students see as the legitimate basis of achievement match some skills such as interpersonal skills and flexibility skills, and clashes with others such as critical thinking skills,

information use, and technology use. The reasons for the mixed result of policies and strategies about the development of employability skills could be related to the fact that the policies are put forward without seeing the underlying mechanisms of practices of employability skills acquisition.

This study embodies a unique and important contribution to the literature about employability skills acquisition. It was the first to use Legitimation Code Theory to predict employability skills acquisition. According to Maton (2016a), Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) provides a collection of concepts that are used in empirical research to explain problems. LCT assumes that actors affirm legitimacy for what they are doing or for the organizing principles embodied by their actions. Practices are underpinned by implicit organizing principles which give legitimacy to actors and their claims to what counts as realizations of valid knowledge. The study could enhance existing knowledge and practice about employability skills acquisition.

The study extends the research findings on employability skills by combining employability skills research with Legitimation Code Theory. The study highlights the importance of using other dimensions of legitimation code theory for a comprehensive understanding of the practice of employability skills acquisition in higher education institutions. The results of the study can have implications for potential studies in other countries to identify the kinds of *specialization codes* exist in other parts of the world regarding employability skills acquisition. Researchers are encouraged to identify specialization codes that exist in other universities to know whether the same or different specialization codes exist for employability skills acquisition. Such knowledge helps to understand whether the specialization codes concerning employability skills are universal or locally contexed. In addition to this, we recommend that other researchers locally or abroad use other dimensions of Legitimation Code Theory (such as semantic code) to understand the dynamics of employability skills acquisition so that we have a more complete understanding of the whole practice of employability skills acquisition.

Moreover, the simple linear regression output has shown the possibility of predicting the employability skills of students from their legitimation code. The more students have élite code, the better their overall employability skills in the context of the three public universities in this study. That could be because when students have a higher epistemic relation and a social relation about employability skills, they are more likely to benefit from both classroom practices and their personal experiences. The finding validates legitimation code theory in that practices can be explained by organizing principles such as legitimation codes.

The findings of this study also contribute to the Legitimation Code Theory, which is a developing framework. Our study has proven that it is possible to predict achievement or perception of competence of students' employability skills using legitimation codes. In this research, it happened to be possible to predict the employability skills of students using their legitimation codes.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study will contribute to the literature about employability skills since there are few studies done on employability skills using the Legitimation Code Theory. It can be concluded from

the findings of the study that the more students have an elite code, which is the more epistemic relation and social relation towards employability skills, the better their perceived competence in employability skills. Ten percent of the employability skills of students can be explained by specialization codes of students. All four specialization codes are apparent in the acquisition of employability practice. Further research is required to better understand the underlying practices of employability skills acquisition using other dimensions of Legitimation Code Theory.

This study recommends that Ministry of Education should take national assessment to identify the legitimation codes with regard to employability skills before suggesting strategies for the development of these skills in higher education institutions. Policies about development of employability skills should be suggested by seeing what is behind the practice of employability skills. Students should be encouraged to get involved in extracurricular activities early on; the career centers should provide support not only for graduating students but also for incoming students beginning from first year so that students can develop an élite code.

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Assessment of the COVID-19 Crisis Management in Bahir Dar City Administration Government Secondary Schools as Perceived by Teachers

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine the practices of adaptive leadership implemented by secondary school principals during the COVID-19 crisis to mitigate the pandemic's consequences on students' learning. The study employed the correlational design of the quantitative research approach. Data collected from 242 randomly selected teachers using a questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive (mean, standard deviation, one-sample t-test) and inferential statistics, including the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and multiple regressions. The findings from the data analyses showed that principals employed adaptive leadership in the schools to manage crises of the COVID-19 pandemic. Protecting the leadership voices below (β=.266) and identifying adaptive challenges (β=.190) were predictors of crisis management. Adaptive leadership contributed to 30.7% of crisis management. Giving work back to people (β =.314, p<.05) and identifying adaptive challenges (β=.269) predict the pre-crisis management phase respectively. Crisis management was aided by leadership voice (β =.331) and identifying adaptive challenges (β =.325, p<05). Leadership voice (β =.395, p<05) and distress reduction (β =.185, p<05) were factors in post-crisis management. To conclude, principals practiced adaptive leadership; protecting the leadership voices below, and identifying adaptive challenges were the best predictors of crisis management. As a recommendation, principals should take part in identifying adaptive tasks and leave technical challenges to teachers; principals must be open to those teachers who have different views from the rest of the group and to do this, they must preserve leadership voices from below, and lastly, principals must support the tasks that teachers desire to perform depending on their interests.

Introduction

Although there is no universal definition of crisis, many agree that it is a condition that creates a significant threat or chaos in an organization, which can hurt the organization and its employee's performance and survival (Purnomo et al., 2021; Bundy et al., 2017). What is universally known is that crises require unique and flexible management and leadership styles

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(Ozkayran et al., 2020). That is, it should be managed carefully in a special process that produces a strategic response, through a group of well-trained managers who possess special skills to reduce losses due to crisis (Samawi, 2021).

Regarding the study area context, schools have always adapted to changing circumstances and activities, but the COVID-19 pandemic was a unique situation that had an impact on schools all across the world (UNICEF, 2021). Its effects on schools forced all levels of government to implement previously unheard-of mitigation measures. As a result, the responses of the federal, state, and local governments to the pandemic are varied, but closing schools to stop the spread of the virus was common (UNICEF, 2021). The same measures work throughout Ethiopia and particularly in the Amhara regional state secondary schools. Above all, the pandemic has undoubtedly created major shifts in human existence. Norms of living, ways of interaction, and the process of just being and becoming differ dramatically (Herron, et al, 2022). This indicates that many social issues in the study are affected by the pandemic which required the leaders' utmost effort.

Since school systems are always susceptible to changing circumstances and continuous reforms, accordingly, they require principals who are acquainted with the causes and consequences of the crisis and how to manage them. Supporting this, Purnomo et al. (2021) explained that school principals should have special skills to prepare, manage, and find solutions to the possible crisis that threatens the existence of schools.

Liu and Froese (2020), however, argued that, just like the regular duties of crisis management, educational crisis management demands a range of activities carried out both by individuals and schools. That is, principals need to plan, organize, monitor and evaluate, communicate, and lead to manage an educational crisis (Adams & Kritsonis, 2006; Liu & Froese, 2020; Purnomo et al., 2021; Samawi, 2021). Other writers (such as Aksu & Deveci as cited in Andrianopoulos, 2015; Bundy et al., 2017; Smith & Riley, 2012) supplement that a crisis can be managed by being categorized into three phases: pre-crisis (prevention and preparation for crisis), crisis response (dealing with, containing, and limiting its damage), and post-crisis (recovery from damage). According to these sources, "pre-crisis management" refers to recognizing the signs of a crisis before it arises or becoming aware of the problem's potential damage ahead of time. This stage introduces leaders to people without providing strategies to protect them from the negative effects of a crisis. The second phase refers to preparing crisis management plans for protection from crises or emergency action plans to shield against the consequences of the crisis. At this stage, for example, a crisis management team can be formed to implement the necessary safeguards. The last stage, known as the "post-crisis management phase," refers to establishing new strategies and tactics to manage the possible crisis. At this stage, leaders such as school principals are expected to transform the crises they encounter into opportunities.

In a state of crisis, consequently, organizations need a leader more than a manager (Northouse, 2019). According to Northouse, unlike management, which requires a focus on systems and abiding by rules and regulations, leadership focuses on creativity, harmony, and agility. Accordingly, in rescuing the survival and lives of human beings and nations from the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, leadership plays a more significant role than management. In such

times when the socio-economic foundations of society are shaken, leaders must be dynamic and flexible enough to deliver the right leadership services that suit the changing needs and risks facing them (Heifetz et al., 2009). Hence, Heifetz et al. claim that swift and bold decisions are necessary because, in crises where evolving uncertainties are diverse, leaders face a scarcity of evidence and incomplete scientific advice.

Heifetz et al. (2009) and Northouse (2019) suggest that adaptive leadership is a more appropriate and very essential leadership style during times of crisis. That is because, according to these sources, it provides more attention to four pivotal elements: situational awareness, quick decision-making, effective communication, and synergy and energy. In this respect, Heifetz et al. (2009) assert that "adaptive leadership is the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive" (p. 27). Similarly, Northouse (2019) claims that "adaptive leadership is a unique kind of leadership that focuses on the dynamics of mobilizing people to address change" (p. 395). Joy (2021) asserts that adaptive leadership "is a practical leadership model that helps people and businesses adapt and thrive in difficult situations" (p. 54). All of these scholars agree that adaptive leadership is essential for leaders because it paves the way for learning, adapting, and improving to new situations as they arise, rather than simply adhering to behavioural models that no longer serve the organization's objectives.

To Northouse (2019), the speed of change that generates crises requires principals to inspire school communities to adapt to the changing challenges they faced. For Jefferies (2017), such a situation demands that principals learn from challenges and tend to employ different approaches not practiced in earlier experiences. The inculcation of such behaviors among teachers and students will guide principals towards adapting to changes by encouraging subordinates to creatively think and introduce new and innovative solutions for problems they face (Hsieh et al., 2014; Northouse, 2019).

Other sources of literature (e.g., Fakhro, 2021; Jefferies, 2017; Taormina, 2008; Northouse, 2019) expound on the need for contingency leadership in the event of a crisis because each crisis is unique in its own right and no particular style of leadership can be applied in an organization. However, a leader who makes decisions based on the circumstances is required. Harris and Jones (2020) complement that instead of other leadership types that disempower followers and are not effective when educational institutions are faced with uncertainties, challenges, and complexities, the variant of contingency leadership known as adaptive leadership is the best style during a crisis for its empowering characteristics for followers.

In general, many scholars (e.g., Fakhro, 2021; Heifetz et al., 2009; Jefferies, 2017; Nissim & Simon, 2021) prescribe adaptive leadership as an essential remedy for managing complex situations resulting from crises. According to Northouse (2019), this leadership model is grounded in the notion that people who are exposed to the problem must be part of the solution. Heifetz et al. (2009) and Northouse (2019) also claim that adaptive leadership requires determining the currently required change while rethinking how organizations will adapt and thrive in a new environment. Accordingly, adaptive leadership is a means to manage uncertainties during a crisis (Nelson & Squires, 2017). On this basis, Bagwell (2020) suggests that principals who experience

a new test during a time of crisis can build resilience and capacity for their school to weather future disorders caused by COVID-19 by employing adaptive leadership.

Heifetz et al. (2009) and Northouse (2019) assert that six leader behaviours are very essential during crisis management or for being an adaptive leader. These include getting on the balcony, identifying adaptive challenges, regulating distress, maintaining disciplined attention, giving the work back to the people, and protecting the leadership voices from below. According to Northouse (2019), even though they have their natural sequence in the process of adaptive leadership, many of them overlap with each other, but leaders should demonstrate them at the same time.

According to Northouse (2019), getting on the balcony refers to the whole crisis system and the patterns within it to grapple effectively with a challenge that is adaptive rather than technical by a leader. It is often carried out by alternating between participating and observing. To succeed in this practice the leader must be able to get some distance from the situation and gain perspective for which s/he should be both active and reflective. Identifying adaptive challenges refers to analyzing and diagnosing the challenges by leaders, besides getting on the balcony and observing the dynamics of the complex situations faced as a result of the crisis (Heifetz et al., 2009; Owens & Valesky, 2014). Otherwise, a complete failure occurs if leaders fail to diagnose challenges correctly. Northouse (2019), in this respect, underlines that "approaching challenges with the wrong style of leadership is maladaptive'' (p. 402). The key issue at this juncture, according to these sources, is distinguishing between technical challenges (clear problems that can be solved by applying technical expertise) and adaptive challenges (complex problems that involve different understood elements or elements which are not easy to identify that can bring unpredictable outcomes).

Regulating distress emphasizes the need for leaders to monitor the stress people are experiencing and keep it within a product range or regulate it (Northouse, 2019). These sources suggest three ways that leaders can use to maintain production levels of stress: an atmosphere in which people can feel safe tackling difficult problems; help people manage the uncertainty that accompanies adaptive work; and regulate distress to maintain production levels. Maintaining disciplined attention refers to encouraging subordinates to emphasize the tough work they need to undertake in times of crisis. This may include responding to distractions including scapegoating, denial and turf battles, resolving conflict openly and utilizing it as a source of creativity, deepening debate by avoiding polarized issues, and defending those who raise hard questions, generate distress, and challenge people to rethink the issues.

According to Northouse (2019), giving the work back to people refers to delegating subordinates to take risks and responsibility and encouraging them to make mistakes to instill self-confidence in them and their problem-solving capacity. With this, subordinates may not only feel secure in what they are doing but also want to get actively involved in solving problems. In addition, too much authority can obstruct an organization, decrease the confidence of people to solve problems on their own, result in dependence on leaders, inhibit involvement in adaptive activities, and suppress their creative capacities. Finally, protecting the voices of leadership from

below refers to carefully listening to the ideas of people, particularly those on the fringe, marginalized, or even deviant in their behaviour.

Statement of the Problem

It has been about three years since COVID 19 has caused uproar across the world. The same experience holds in Ethiopia. The more students stay without regular schooling, the more they become exposed to distress and tensions caused by the pandemic. During the pandemic, students in Ethiopia in general, and in the current study area, in particular, stayed for a long time without the regular schooling. There were of course attempts made to provide education using home take exams through telegram and other electronic platforms, and assessment by assignments at secondary school level.

In such situations, leadership matters greatly. A complex and uncertain environment under tremendous pressure and limited resources, accordingly, prompted principals to deliver leadership that could help them resume the teaching and learning activity. In other words, the situation demanded that principals employ a leadership style that can help students learn in a different and chaotic environment instead of relying on the competencies, behaviours, and situational contingencies of individual principals. In this respect, different sources of literature reviewed above advocate that adaptive leadership skills are very essential in such times of crisis. After reviewing a wide range of literature, Bagwell (2020), for instance, suggested that "school leaders who take an adaptive leadership approach and leverage key leadership practices can support their schools in navigating the challenges of uncertain educational environments in adaptive ways." (p.1). Principals in such situations must be courageous and ready to demonstrate their highest caliber to motivate not only teachers and students but also families to return students to school, despite the challenging environment in which we all find ourselves.

The purpose of this study was therefore to investigate the experiences of principals in leading schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the lessons learned, if any, for similar crises schools may face. The study placed particular emphasis on assessing whether principals have used adaptive leadership to manage the adaptive challenges brought about by COVID-19 in their schools. The following research questions were specified to spearhead the study.

1. To what extent did principals employ adaptive leadership behaviors or activities to manage the COVID-19 crisis in the study area?
2. Were there significant relationships between adaptive leadership behaviors and crisis management in the study area?
3. To what extent did each behavior of adaptive leadership explain the overall crisis management in the study area?
4. To what extent did each adaptive leadership activity influence its respective phase of crisis management?

Methods

This study assessed the practice of adaptive leadership behavior practices of school principals in this crisis management. To that effect, it employed the correlational design of the quantitative research approach. Four schools were selected among eleven government secondary schools in Bahir Dar City Administration just by employing the lottery method of probability sampling. Finally, 265 teachers were recruited among a total of 785 by applying Yamane's (1973) formula mentioned below. In the meantime, the proportionate-to-size technique* was taken into consideration to avoid sampling bias.

Table 1

Sample Schools and Sample Size

School Name	Population Size	Sample Size
Giyon Secondary School	135	78
Tana Haik Secondary School	115	67
Bahir Dar Secondary School	102	60
Fassilo Secondary School	102	60
Total	454	265

Source. Bahir Dar City Administration Education Department (2022)

A questionnaire was employed to gather data because it was found an appropriate instrument to fit the approach of the study. The questionnaire had a five-point Likert scale between 1=strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree. It was adopted from standardized sources and managed by dividing it into two parts. The first part was about adaptive leadership behaviors adopted by Northouse (2019). This included five items for each adaptive leadership behavior that in aggregate becomes 30 items. The second part contained 31 items on phases of crisis management in which 7 on the pre-crisis phase, 8 on the crisis phase, and 16 on the post-crisis phase – was taken from Aksu and Deveci (cited in Maya, 2014).

Before conducting a full-scale operation, the instrument was checked for its validity and reliability at Shum-Abo general secondary school teachers. In addition, an English language expert has checked the language clarity and two experienced instructors in the department of educational planning and management have assessed the content validity of the instrument. Besides the utilization of simple random sampling and testing the validity and reliability of the instruments, necessary assumptions such as normality, and multicollinearity were examined and found fit to employ the parametric test in this study. Table 2, for instance, displays the internal consistency of the instrument was at an acceptable level to pursue the next step.

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* $n = \frac{N}{1+N\,(e)2}$ Where n = sample size; N = population size; e = margin of error or confidence level

Table 2

Reliability Test

Variables	Dimensions	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
Adaptive Leadership	Getting on the Balcony	5	.930
	Adaptive Challenges	5	.926
	Regulating Distress	5	.919
	Disciplined Attention	5	.915
	Giving work back to the people	5	.917
	Leadership voices from below	5	.914
	Total	30	.914
Crisis Management	Pre-Crisis	7	.915
	During -Crisis	8	.914
	Post -Crisis	16	.915
	Total	31	.912

Finally, the collected data were analyzed using descriptive (mean, standard deviation, one-sample t-test) and inferential statistics (Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r) and multiple regressions, depending on the requirements of the research questions). A one-sample t-test was used to understand the practice of adaptive leadership by principals during the pandemic. The relationship between each adaptive leadership activity and the phases of crisis management was examined using Pearson product-moment correlation. Finally, the effect of each adaptive leadership behavior on crisis management was manipulated through stepwise multiple regression.

Results

Out of 265 questionnaires distributed, 249 (94%) were returned. Among these, seven questionnaires were rejected as they were incomplete when filled out. As a result, 242 (91.23 %) questionnaires were found usable in this study.

The Practice of Adaptive Leadership Style

Table 5 demonstrates the practice of adaptive leadership in the schools under study. Although all the mean scores, except getting on the balcony, were greater than the average score (3 in this case). The one-sample t-test output in the table showed that only the leadership voices below demonstrated a significant difference from the average ($t = 2.627$, $df = 241$, $p < 0.01$). This implies that, except for protecting the leadership voices below (i.e., open-mindedness to carefully listen to the ideas of people at the edge of risk), school principals did not demonstrate the other behaviors of adaptive leadership effectively.

Table 3

One-Sample t-test for Adaptive Leadership Practices of Principals (N=242, df =241)

Variable	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	Test value = 3	
				t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Getting on the balcony	2.9306	.54611	-.06942	-1.978	.049
Identify adaptive challenges	3.0521	.67812	.05207	1.194	.233
Regulating distress	3.0653	.71257	.06529	1.425	.155
Disciplined attention	3.0802	.73107	.08017	1.706	.089
Giving work back	3.0215	.6718	.02149	0.498	.619
Protect leadership voices below	3.1149	.68015	.11488	2.627	.009

The Link Between Adaptive Leadership Behaviors and Crisis Management

To investigate the link between each factor of adaptable leadership and crisis management, the Pearson movement correlation coefficient (r) was used. Field's (2009) descriptors were used to explain the correlation coefficients: between $=\pm.10$ and $\pm.29$ (weak relationship); between $\pm.30$ and $\pm.49$ (moderate relationship); and between $\pm.50$ and ±1.0 (strong relationship).

Table 4

Correlation Analysis between Principals' Adaptive Leadership Style and Crisis Management

Variables	GB	AC	RD	DA	WB	LB	PC	DC	POC	CM	AL
GB	1										
AC	.408**	1									
RD	.315**	.746**	1								
DA	.077	.605**	.737**	1							
WB	.128*	.526**	.644**	.737**	1						
LB	.105	.542**	.634**	.732**	.806**	1					
PC	.152*	.430**	.414**	.377**	.450**	.448**	1				
DC	.241**	.455**	.418**	.346**	.399**	.458**	.769**	1			
POC	.116	.349**	.389**	.321**	.424**	.453**	.626**	.690**	1		
CM	.190**	.460**	.456**	.389**	.475**	.508**	.885**	.919**	.873**	1	
AL	.399**	.822**	.884**	.855**	.837**	.834**	.491**	.497**	.444**	.534**	1

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), GB= Getting on the Balcony, AC= Identifying Adaptive Challenges, RD= Regulating distress, DA= Disciplined Attention, WB= Giving the work Back to the people, LB= Protecting the Leadership voices from Below, PC= Pre-crisis, DC= During Crisis, POC= Post Crisis, CM= Crisis Management, AL=Adaptive Leadership

The correlation analysis between principals' adaptive leadership style and crisis management is shown in table 4. At 0.01 alpha level, the adaptive leadership style was strongly and positively correlated with crisis management (r = .534; p < 0.01). Adaptive leadership style was moderately correlated with pre-crisis management (r =.491; p < 0.01), during crisis management (r =.497; p < 0.01), and post-crisis management (r =.444; p < 0.01) respectively. Each dimension of the adaptive leadership style has also a positive and significant correlation with each dimension of crisis management. This means that an increase in adaptive leadership style is related to an increase in the level of crisis management.

The Effect of Adaptive Leadership Behaviors on Crisis Management

This influence was assessed by using regression analysis. Before applying regression, the basic assumptions were considered.

Table 5

Liner Regression Analysis on Adaptive Leadership Styles and Crisis Management

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	Sig.
1	Regression	16.738	1	16.738	95.974	0.324	0.307	0.41059	.000[b]
	Residual	41.857	240	0.174					
	Total	58.595	241						

Note. Predictors: (Constant)= GB, AC, RD, DA, WBP, LB, Dependent Variable=CM, GB= Getting on the Balcony, AC= Adaptive Challenges, RD= Regulating Distress, DA= Disciplined Attention, WB= Giving work Back to people, LB= Protecting the Leadership voices Below, CM= Crisis Management

Regarding the impact of adaptive leadership on crisis management, a linear regression analysis was employed, and table 5 shows that adaptive leadership style predicted 30.7% of the CM R^2 (.324; F (1, 240), 95.974; p <.05) significantly. To check how well the regression equation fits the data, ANOVA was carried out and the results of ANOVA (model fit) are in table 6 so that the model predicts the dependent variable (CM) significantly at P < .05 and it was a good fit.

The Effect of Each Adaptive Leadership Behavior on Overall Crisis Management

Table 6

Multiple Regression Analysis on Adaptive Leadership Style and Crisis Management

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
2	(Constant)	0.637	0.14		4.551	.000
	LVB	0.266	0.046	0.366	5.715	.000
	AC	0.19	0.047	0.261	4.068	.000

The result in table 6 showed that a comprehensive regression model 2 was obtained following regression model tests. Hence, the result indicated that from the adaptive leadership dimensions, leadership voice below (β=.266, (p < .05)) and, identifying adaptive challenges (β=.190, (p < .05) were the best contributors to crisis management. The rest were excluded by the model.

The Impact of each Adaptive Leadership Dimension on Each Phase of Crisis Management

To examine the impact of sub-dimensions of adaptive leadership style on each phase of crisis management, stepwise multiple regressions were carried out.

Table 7

Multiple Regression Analysis on each Dimension of Adaptive Leadership Style and Pre-crisis Management

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	St. Error	Beta		
2	(Constant)	0.96	0.2		4.806	.000
	WBP	0.314	0.067	0.309	4.707	.000
	AC	0.269	0.066	0.267	4.066	.000

Note. Dependent Variable= CM, Predictors (constant) Variable= Adaptive leadership dimensions.

To check the effect of each dimension of adaptive leadership with the pre-crisis management phase of crisis management first, all the dimensions of adaptive leadership were entered using stepwise regression. The model excluded the rest four dimensions and only two, i.e. giving work back to people (β=.314, (p < .05)) and, identifying adaptive challenges (β=.269, (p < .05)) predict the pre-crisis management phase.

Table 8

Multiple Regression Analysis on Dimensions of Each Adaptive Leadership Style During-Crisis Management

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
2	(Constant)	0.7	0.219	.000	3.198	.000
	LVB	0.331	0.073	.000	4.551	.000
	AC	0.325	0.073	0.293	4.459	.000

Note. Dependent Variable= CM, Predictors (constant) Variable= Adaptive leadership dimensions.

The result in table 8 showed that from the adaptive leadership dimensions, leadership voice below (β=.331, (p < .05)) and, identifying adaptive challenges (β=.325, (p < .05)) were contributors during crisis management. The model excluded the rest of the sub-dimensions of adaptive leadership for they contribute nothing during crisis management phases of crisis management.

Table 9

Multiple Regression Analysis on Dimensions of Each Adaptive Leadership Style and Post-crisis Management

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
2	(Constant)	0.926	0.223		4.161	.000
	LVB	0.395	0.084	0.346	4.688	.000
	RD	0.185	0.08	0.17	2.303	.022

Note. Dependent Variable= CM, Predictors (constant) Variable= Adaptive leadership dimensions.

Table 9 portrayed that from the adaptive leadership dimensions, leadership voice below (β=.395, (p < .05)) and, reducing distress (β=.185, (p < .05)) greatly contribute to post-crisis management phases. From these sub-dimensions of adaptive leadership style, the leadership voice below relatively contributes higher than reducing distress. The rest dimensions were excluded by the model since they had no contribution to crisis management.

Discussion

The first goal of this study was to look at adaptive leadership practices in secondary schools in Bahir Dar City administration during a crisis (the COVID-19 pandemic). Hence, the result showed that school principals in the study area are practicing an adaptive leadership style during the COVID-19 crisis management process. Similar to the idea, Joy (2021) also stated that "it is a practical leadership model that supports people and firms to adapt and thrive in challenging situations"(p. 54). This notion is also reinforced by Heifetz et al. (2009) and Northouse (2019), who suggest that adaptive leadership is a more appropriate and very essential leadership style during times of crisis. The rationale is that it provides more attention to creating situational awareness, quick decision-making, effective communication, synergy, and energy, which are highly required during the COVID-19 crisis. Harris and Jones, (2020) agree that the adaptive leadership style is the best during times of school crisis because of its empowering characteristics for followers. This implies that adaptive leadership is one means of overcoming the crisis, and principals practice it to overcome the challenge.

Assessing the relationship between adaptive leadership and crisis management is also another area of concern. Accordingly, a correlation analysis between principals' adaptive

leadership style and crisis management is shown, and at 0.01 alpha level, the adaptive leadership style was strongly and positively correlated with crisis management (*r = .534; p < 0.01)*. More specifically, adaptive leadership style was moderately correlated with pre-crisis management (*r =.491; p < 0.01*), during crisis management (r =.497; p < 0.01), and post-crisis management (r =.444; p < 0.01) respectively. Each dimension of the adaptive leadership style also has a positive and significant correlation with each dimension of crisis management. This means an increase in adaptive leadership style is related to an increase in the level of COVID-19 crisis management. Though no exact research finding indicates this relationship in detail, most literature indicates a positive relationship between adaptive leadership and uncertainties (Heifetz et al., 2009) and Northouse (2019). This implies that adaptive leadership is highly related to the crisis management process.

Identifying the extent of the contribution of each dimension of adaptive leadership to overall crisis management is also another intention of the present study. Thus, the best predictors of crisis management are leadership voice (=.266; p. 05) and identifying adaptive challenges (=.190; p. 05). This regression result can be interpreted as a 1% change in leadership voice and identifying adaptive challenges; the crisis management process was 26.6 %, and 19% respectively. This will help school principals consider the leader-follower relationship and environmental issues in which leaders and followers' function since adaptive leadership is altering leadership behavior as the condition varies. The COVID-19 pandemic displays a very complex combination of adaptive and technical challenges, but identifying the adaptive challenges should be the task of leaders, leaving the technical challenges to teachers as experts in the school (Mayet, 2021)**.** Similarly, the study by Weng (2009) also stated that adaptive leadership is a critical component in responding to crises, and that it requires both internal and external coordination at the individual and organizational levels. More similar to the finding is the idea that technical approaches to the complex problem of communication during a pandemic may have included a top-down approach where the administrator identified the problem and made decisions to solve it; whereas, an adaptive approach to the challenge may have leveraged leaders from below to present the problem and discuss the best course of action (Heifetz et al., 2009). According to the linear regression results, the dimensions of adaptive leadership style together predict a 30.7% variation in crisis management. This indicates that minimizing the impact of COVID-19 on education would increase by 30.7% if school principals used an adaptive leadership style.

Assessing the contribution of each dimension of adaptive leadership to each dimension of crisis management is also another objective of the study. Giving work back to people (=.314, p.05) and identifying adaptive challenges (=.269, p.05) were adaptive leadership dimensions that contributed to the pre-crisis management dimension. This implies that if school principals delegate responsibility to teachers and encourage them to make mistakes to instill confidence in their problem-solving capacity, the probability of managing risk during the pre-crisis phase will be enhanced by 31.4%. In the same way, if principals invest most of their time in identifying and adapting to challenges (diagnosing the challenges and observing the dynamics of the complex situations faced as a result of the crisis), their crisis management will be enhanced by 26.9%. This idea is similar to the notion suggested by Heifetz et al. (2009).

Similarly, during the crisis management phase, the best contributors were the leadership voice below (=.331, p. 05) and identifying adaptive challenges (=.325, p. 05). This indicated that the more principals carefully listened to the ideas of teachers, particularly those on the fringe, marginalized, or even deviant in their behavior, the more they could manage crises during the crisis management stage by 33.1%. Besides, the probability of predicting a crisis (32.5%) during the crisis management phases is increased by identifying adaptive challenges.

Finally, the leadership voice below (=.395; p. 05) and reducing distress (=.185, p. 05) have an effect on the post-crisis management phase. This result shows that if principals still emphasize the ideas of marginalized teachers, they play a pivotal role in the management of crises at the post-crisis level, which strongly increases crisis management by 39.5%. Furthermore, if principals focused on regulating distress (monitoring teachers' stress and regulating it), post-crisis management would improve by 18.5%.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The evidence from the data shows that schools in the study area are highly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. To manage the crises as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, principals employed adaptive leadership behaviors. Principals used an adaptive leadership style during the COVID-19 pandemic and, the likely crisis management process was increased by 30.7%, which indicates that adaptive leadership contributed to COVID-19 pandemic prevention. Teachers perceived that listening to the ideas of teachers, particularly those on the margins, marginalized, or even deviant in their behavior) and identifying adaptive challenges (analyzing and diagnosing the challenges that principals faced as a result of the crisis) is a significant behavior that contributes to COVID-19 pandemic crisis management. The findings of the study also showed that Principals involved themselves in giving work back to people and identifying adaptive challenges to manage the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Similarly, the best contributors to COVID-19 crisis management were principals who were very active in exercising their leadership voice and identifying adaptive challenges. Regarding the post-crisis management phase, the results showed that leadership voice and reducing distress were found to be the best predictors of the post-crisis management process. Thus, teachers perceived that leaders' practice of COVID-19 crisis management in government secondary schools in Bahir Dar City Administration used adaptive leadership behaviors to the tune of 30.7%, which implies that the rest of the contribution was associated with other leadership styles left for future researchers.

Based on the findings of the study, different recommendations are forwarded. To implement crisis management in education, secondary school principals in the study area are encouraged to adopt an adaptive leadership style. To make this possible, principals should involve themselves in the identification of adaptive challenges from the technical challenges first. Adaptive challenges that principals should involve themselves with, for example, (addressing conflicts at the workplace, solving problems that call for a change in attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, roles, relationships, and approaches to how to accomplish goals) can be some of the examples of adaptive challenges that need principals' involvement. Technical challenges that require teachers' expertise

should be the responsibilities of teachers themselves. Above all, for adaptive challenges, principals should give support, challenge, or even take themselves out of the picture to mobilize others to do the work they need to do. Secondly, during uncertainties, it is strongly advised that principals must be careful enough to be open to teachers who may have different perspectives. When different decisions are made related to the management of a crisis, there should be involvement of teachers who are different in their views or beliefs. Thirdly, reducing distress is a very important issue that principals should do when uncertainties happen. This may be possible by creating a holding environment; providing direction, protection, orientation, conflict management, and productive norms; and regulating personal distress. Lastly, in relation to giving work back to people, principals should empower teachers to decide what to do in circumstances where they feel uncertain, expressing belief in their ability to solve their own problems, and encouraging them to think for themselves.

Conflict of Interest
The authors have no conflict of interest.

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Curriculum Development in Ethiopia vis-à-vis Patrick Slattery's Postmodern Curriculum Principles: A Reflection

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Abstract

This article revisits curriculum development in the Ethiopian context vis-à-vis Patrick Slattery's postmodern views of curriculum development principles (rejection of metanarratives, the artificial bifurcations, the interconnectedness of individual experiences in a global context, the assertion and validation of everyone's voice in the school community and understanding of the complexity of metaphysics) using critical review and discursive analysis. For this purpose, the different time education initiatives, education policies, education sector development programs, and general education curriculum development frameworks were reviewed. The findings unveil that behavioristic, linear and objective-oriented, ideological or hegemonic, competitive, and patriarchal features shadowed curriculum development in Ethiopia. The Cartesian dualism of Western and Tylerian rationale metanarrative; bifurcation of students in ability groups and learning outcomes; the abandonment of different voices (mainly educated professionals) in curriculum development; the rejection of important values, religious and cultural thoughts in the pretext of secular education; and the detachment of indigenous and value education from Ethiopian schooling stipulate postmodern perspective in developing curriculum. Despite the rhetorical representation of postmodern viewpoints in educational policy, the current practical operation is also scant. Hence, the article implies some useful lessons to deconstruct and construct critical issues while developing curricula in the Ethiopian education system.

Introduction

The education system in Ethiopia has undergone many conflicting views and ideologies. Curriculum development has covered a large landscape in the introduction of modern education in Ethiopia despite imported and donor-driven curriculum (Tekeste, 2006), inadequate research in the area (Woube, 2014), and dominantly influenced by western values and curriculum (Tekeste, 2006). The traditional approach which is based on behaviorism (positivism) theory

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assumes measuring and controlling of behavior, dominates curriculum development (how the curriculum is planned, implemented, and evaluated) and curriculum development calls for alternative approaches and modes to address the curriculum development issues. Hence, some curricularists argue that being systematic doesn't impede flexibility and that their models consider multiple variables and permit choices. They also argued that as everything is relational or contextual, there are no universal principles to be applied to all curriculum development processes. However, despite reservations on critique on limitations of the model, many wrote about the domination of the objective model of curriculum development in Ethiopia since1974 (Feleke, 1990; Woube, 2014).There were also curriculum scholars and historians who challenged the relevance of curriculum in Ethiopia (Seyoum, 1996; Tekeste, 1996, 2006). Policy documents at different times (e.g., MoE, 1994, 2002, 2018, 2023) also unveiled the problems of education in terms of addressing access, equity, relevance, and quality.

The official discourses and narratives in Ethiopian education over the last several decades have justified various reforms taken in widening of access, ensuring social justice, and improving the quality of education (Tesfaye, 2014). Despite different reform initiatives such as the Education Sector Review (ESR), Evaluative Research of the General Education System of Ethiopia (ERGESE), and Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO), there is still a problem with the relevance and quality of curriculum development processes.

Overview of Curriculum Development in Ethiopia

Historically, education in Ethiopia has been pigeonholed into *'traditional'* and *'modern'* rhetoric with many ups and downs in different ideological, philosophical, historical, and political orientations. In this vein, curriculum development and research experiences in Ethiopia were divided into two – curriculum development in the pre-modern education era (4th century A. D – 1908) and curriculum development in the modern education era (1908–to date) (Woube, 2014). Similarly, there has been an interest in the historical development of education and curriculum development in Ethiopia (Akalewold, 2005; Alemayehu & Lasser, 2012; Lemma, 2015; Messay, 2006; Seyoum 1996; Solomon, 2019; Solomon & Alemayehu, 2017; Tebeje, 2018; Tekeste, 1996).

Although it is very difficult to trace when indigenous education in Ethiopia started, the pre-modern era was coined with the introduction of the Church education system in the 4th century followed by Quranic education systems in the 11th century that extends up to the introduction of western-oriented modern education in1908. On the other hand, the curriculum development and research in the modern education era in Ethiopia were divided into five periods: The Pre-Italian occupation period (French orientation of education period) (1908–1936), the Italian occupation period (1936–1941), the post-Italian occupation period (British and American orientation of education periods) (1941–1974), the Socialist oriented education period (1974–1991), and the post-1991 period (1991–to date). In those periods, Woube (2014) noticed that the introduction of modern education was from the vacuum by importing textbooks, other curricular materials, and medium of instruction from abroad. Besides, it was introduced without the research evidence in curriculum development and the participation of experts of indigenous knowledge, rather there

was high involvement of foreigners in curricular decisions, selection of instructional languages, and cultural considerations serving political interest (Alemayehu & Lasser, 2012).

In those modern education periods, despite the different important reform initiatives, there has been lack of relevance in the curriculum. For instance, the ESR was inspired by Ethiopianization in terms of philosophy, aims, Ethiopian culture, language, and curriculum. But, the ESR was introduced in 1971 for curriculum and research issues. Despite no agreed upon decision of applying a single curriculum development model, the objective model has been used in the planning and development of education since 1974 (Feleke, 1990). Still, this model is also the most widely applied model in Ethiopia (Tadesse, 2020).

ERGESE was another educational reform initiative in 1983 established to investigate the quality of primary and secondary schooling in Ethiopia and to recommend area of improvement in curriculum development. However, ERGESE was also technical in approach and the main findings emphasize factual knowledge and the domination of cognitive objective formation, weak lesson planning, domination of lecturing, and question and answering (MoE, 1986).

Later on, after the downfallen of the Socialist government, the new Education and Training Policy was formulated in 1994 based on the political ideology of the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary and Democratic Front (EPRDF) to provide "secular education" through a radical multilingual curriculum (MoE, 1994). Following this policy formulation, various reform initiatives such as Education Sector Development Programs (ESDPs) (I-V) and Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) (MoE, 2003) were introduced to address the major problems of the sector. TESO focuses on the selection, pre-service and in-service trainings, teacher education institutions and teacher educators. It also concentrates on school-based and student-centered learning, practice-oriented training, and self-preparedness for the teaching profession (MoE, 2003). However, the promise and assumptions of TESO were also challenged by considering the existing realities in Ethiopian schools on effective teacher education programs and educational reform (Dawit, 2008). As a result, the Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT) was introduced in 2009 (MoE, 2009b). Currently, also the New Education Policy (MoE, 2023) and ESDP VI (MoE, 2021) are ratified with the intention to improve the weaknesses of the previous education policy based on the recommendations of the Ethiopian Education Development Roadmap (2018-30) (MoE, 2018).

Despite all these initiatives and reform agenda, the Ethiopian education system is still suffering from a lack of quality and relevance which may result from the linkage of modern and indigenous education. Eleni (cited in Woube, 2014) pointed out that the chronic negligence of indigenous education has resulted in Africa's formal educational policies being totally dependent on indiscriminately imported educational ideas and thoughts. Besides, curriculum development in Ethiopia is more of an ideological curriculum and not addressing Ethiopian realities (Mohammed, 2012) and experiencing problems of the primary curriculum localization or adaptation because of the diversity of the people (Lemma, 2015).

Very recently, an educational reform initiative in the Ethiopian education development roadmap (2018-30) suggests a related issue is introducing an 'inconclusive' curriculum or a curriculum with alternative perspectives on issues. A good example for this is shaping the history

curriculum in such a way that there can be multiple interpretations by people from diverse backgrounds (MoE, 2018). The important question is 'what possible curriculum model/s help to have alternatives in understating curriculum development in Ethiopia?' This article review is triggered to answer this question specifically through: (1) reviewing the curriculum development of Ethiopia vis-a'-vis Slattery's postmodern thoughts using his five principles and (2) reflecting on the existing local literature and policy documents using discursive analysis. For this purpose, the different time education initiatives (ESR, ERGESE, TESO, PGDT); education policies (both the 1994 and the new education policy, 2023); the different education sector development programs (ESDP I-VI), general education curriculum development frameworks, and review of related literature of the education and curriculum development of Ethiopia were reviewed.

A Glimpse of Patrick Slattery's Curriculum Development Principles

Unlike modernists, postmodern curriculum theorists focus on education's larger ideological issues and they view curriculum development as an open system – a journey, rather than a destination to deconstruct interactions of the curriculum with political, economic, social, moral and artistic forces. Patrick Slattery is one of the postmodern curriculum theorists who authored a book entitled "*Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era*" in 2006 under the reconceptualization theory to deconstruct Tylerian tradition and move from positivism to constructivist qualitative autobiography. Slattery's postmodern view of curriculum development assumes a move from traditionalists, perennialists, and essentialists to pragmatists, critical theorists, feminists, deconstructionists, phenomenologists, multiculturalists, poststructuralists, and postmodernists. For Slattery, the curriculum needs to combine pre-modern, modern, and postmodern issues for balanced ecological global sustainability without missing individual perspectives. He also views curriculum as a historical text to be studied using autobiography through consideration of curriculum as currere in reconceptualization and as a theological text that advocates contextual spirituality.

Commonly, in his book, Slattery (2006) organized and discussed postmodernism using five guiding principles: (1) the rejection of metanarratives, (2) the artificial bifurcations, (3) interconnectedness of individual experiences, (4) the affirmation and validation of everyone's voice, and (5) understanding of the complexity of metaphysics in the postmodern era.

Metanarratives of certainty versus deconstructed "truths"

Postmodern curriculum thinkers consider aesthetical context sensibilities of the political, economic, social, and theological issues in curriculum development. But, they refute the assumption about holding the existence of single truth in curriculum theory and development; question the assertion of singularity or metanarrative; elucidate legitimating meaning, experiences and values; and illuminate internal contradiction which leads to bias in racial, ethnic, identity, gender and master narratives such as programmed learning, standardized curriculum, cultural literacy, disembodied learning and disconnected objective in a race, gender and ethnicity (Slattery, 2006). In any curriculum development process, Slattery advocates local, emerging, contextual,

multidimensional, proleptic, contingent, evolving, and autobiographical history to be included. Thus, the deification of the validity of the knowledge based on a unified, singular, and master narrative of history is questioned in favor of eclectic, innovative, revisionist, ironic, and subjective knowledge as in historical interpretation (Slattery, 2006).

Slattery also rejects the positivist-based singularity of method in research and in curriculum development and advocates phenomenological, theological, autobiographical, hermeneutical, and aesthetical inquiry to inspire the understanding of phenomenological experience for individual growth and critical reflection. In place of archaic Tylerian rationale, Slattery also recommends Pinar's four stages of autobiographical reflection: regressive (understanding the past), progressive (understanding the future), analytical (biographic present), and synthetical (putting the past, present, and future in the complexity) under the tradition of reconceptualization of curriculum as 'currere'.

The artificial bifurcations as an obstructer of vision

Slattery coins 'bifurcation' to show the division of humans based on achievement, gender, race, and treatment accordingly in a competitive rather than cooperative sense. Rather than creating artificial 'bifurcations' of the world into "us" and "them", and students into upper and lower groups based on race, learning styles, intelligence, social class, gender, sexual orientation, or religion, since this dichotomy cripple cooperation, Slattery advocates the reintegration of apparent opposites into a creative tension of complementary and multifaceted dimensions of the whole. He also warns of the danger of viewing the world as a multiplicity of antagonistic and dangerous dualisms and opposites that see domination, destruction, and endless dialectic as the only solution in curricula and advocates a shift from the metanarrative of theology as curriculum text to the Cartesian dualism of curriculum to integrated or eclectic of curriculum as theological text. He further suggested that these curriculum materials are inclusive and promote an active learning process using phenomenological experience and eschatological implications.

The interconnectedness of individual experiences in a global context

Slattery's third dimension is the interconnectedness of all experiences and the importance of the autobiographical perspective against the backdrop of interdependence and ecological sustainability to ameliorate ecological crises including the destruction of the environment and its natural beauty using the dual role of informative and transformative pedagogy. He reflects on how the hegemonic dominance of certain cultural activities undermines personal and global survival. He considers the deconstruction of hegemonic texts and contends that textual representation needs to affirm the addition of an eclectic array of alternatives in schools and classrooms to overcome the negative impact of hegemony. Thus, Slattery evokes a multiplicity of interpretations and practices in religion, politics, and history; a multiplicity of complex emotions; and postmodern holistic philosophy. Hence, Slattery believes, curriculum as public discourses, present seeking transformation rather than transmitting culture, assimilating culture, and developing career through hermeneutical understanding which focuses on the community of interpreters and teachers

working together in mutually corrective and mutually collaborative efforts. Slattery also noted that the aesthetic vision and transformative pedagogy should be promoted to facilitate the active participation of both teachers and students through cooperation, holistic view, and multilayered interdisciplinary curriculum engagement in the classroom (Slattery, 2006).

The affirmation and validation of every voice in the school community

Curriculum development in the postmodern era needs to generate opportunities for students to deal with social and educational difficulties on a global basis without separating knowers from their context of community. For this, Slattery proposes community empowerment models to affirm and validate everyone's voice in the school community and promote a meaningful experience. He argues the importance of open discussion on ethnic inequality, issues of segregation, integration, and affirmative action in schools as an integral part of the postmodern curriculum and suggests curriculum development to respect and celebrate the uniqueness of each individual person, text, event, culture, and educative moment. Slattery also challenges curriculum development that exploits socialization, regulation, intimidation, and indoctrination by the name of the separation of religion and government in school. He notes that education should be contextualized, should not detach students' space and time, and must incorporate different perspectives by challenging prejudice of culture, history, politics, and power.

Understanding of the complexity of metaphysics - chaos and uncertainty

The last principle of Slattery's curriculum reconceptualization in the postmodern era is the complexity of metaphysics/chaos to describe curriculum as layers of the meaning entity. Slattery (2006) noted that chaos theory is a move from Newtonian's notion of time (time as clockwork) to Einstein's space-time notion (complex, unpredictable, dynamic, and unexpected). This theory provides aesthetical, political, racial, cultural, theological, and ecological sustainability and interdependence exists physically, psychologically, and spiritually in the complexity of metaphysics. He shows the chaotic and complex nature of postmodern curriculum using *kaleidoscope* (eclectic, changing image patterns in context) rather than *telescopic* (condensing) and *microscopic* (enlarging) which results in the demoralization of educators, disenfranchisement of students, and dissatisfaction of stakeholders as in Taylor's scientific management systems. Accordingly, Slattery suggested a paradigm shift from the linear and objective time management models to a globally interdependent ecological perspective or postmodern holistic philosophy for the emergence of optimal learning environments, just relationships, and ecological sustainability–intrinsic coherence about the body, the spirit, and the cosmos. He underscores the relevance of hermeneutic interpretations through poem experience, literature, the canonic novels, and poems that provide an appropriate and engaging curriculum for students to deconstruct the sedimented preceptors that prevent appreciation of the great artist, musician, athlete, filmmaker, scholar, dancer, or scientist using a hermeneutic circle.

Based on the five guiding principles of Slattery (not the whole book), this article is intended to review the Ethiopian education and curriculum development experiences due to three important reasons:(1)many authors (e.g., Joshi &Verspoor, 2013; Tesfaye, 2014; Tadesse, 2020) and policy documents (e.g., MoE, 2018, 2021, 2023) claimed that the education system in general and the curriculum development of Ethiopian education in particular do not focus on context-based indigenous knowledge, critical thinking, and problem solving, so it is important to have sound theoretical foundation to fill the gaps; (2) the article is also intended to open room for searching alternative approaches of curriculum development in the context of indigenous and context-based knowledge in Ethiopia; and (3) Lastly, Slattery's strong position to involve chief postmodern and constructivist thoughts such as phenomenology, autobiography, aesthetics, theology, history, environmental ecology, and hermeneutics in one's education system and curriculum development process attracted our interest.

Reflections on the Ethiopian Curriculum Development Process vis-à-vis Slattery's Postmodern Curriculum Thoughts

The Ethiopian education system in general and curriculum development in particular have gone through different hurdles with a number of change initiatives and improvements. Despite signs of progress in the curricular development practice of Ethiopia from time to time, still it has its limitations in terms of relevance, quality, equity, contextualization, the inclusion of indigenous knowledge, and the like. As mentioned earlier, in order to explore major breaches, curriculum development reviews were made vis-a'-vis the ensuing five postmodern curriculum development principles of Slattery using discursive analysis.

Metanarratives of Certainty versus Deconstructed "Truths"

The presence of metanarrative in curriculum development in Ethiopia is complex and debatable across historians, educators, and activists. For instance, some scholars noted colonizing Ethiopians psychologically (Messay, 2006; Tekeste, 1996); the use of English as a medium of instruction as a sign of collapse (Tekeste, 2006); and internal colony in Ethiopia through its policy documents in terms of equity and access (Desalegn, 2013).

Other scholars also believed that one of the most noticeable areas of metanarrative is the existence of modern education based on western culture over long native/indigenous knowledge (in terms of the aim of education, textbook writing, way of delivery, etc.) by disregarding all existing cultural, religious and traditional schoolings (Maimire, 2006; Messay, 2006; Mohammed, 2012; Tebeje, 2018; Tekeste,2006); considering traditional education as backward among elitists (Mesay, 2006); promoting hatred to the tradition and history of Ethiopia (Tekeste, 1996); and opening room for neo-colonialization albeit psychologically through imported curriculum, not physically (Mesay, 2006; Seoyum, 1996; Tekeste, 2006). This modern education appears ideologically affiliated, decontextualized, and practically destructive (Maimire, 2010 Mohammed, 2012). To this end, Maimire (2010) commented on Africa as an inglorious and cumbersome conquest and the manifestation of marginalizing thinking, copyism, and dictatorial

methods through elitism which spreads western education as sound, which is no exception to Ethiopia.

The move from elitism (emperor's) education to massification (socialist government) and pluralists (EPRDF) (ethnic decentralization and secularization) (Bezabih, 2019) brought ideological intrusion that repressive ambitions and neglect of indigenous legends rather than promoting them as philosophical (Mohammed, 2012). As a result, many scholars challenge the utilization of western policies in the Ethiopian schooling system (Tekeste, 1996; Mesay, in Mohammed, 2012); trying to overcome a one-size-fits-all model due to external imposition and centralization (Tadesse, 2020); giving distinct room for diversity dimensions such as ethnicity, language, and gender in education policy (Tariku & Gara, 2016); and challenging a 'rational-structural paradigm' in higher education curriculum reform (Tadesse & Melese, 2016). In earlier times, there were different manifestations such as considering curriculum as the culture of certain dominant groups (Mehari, 2011; Seyoum, 1996) and reflecting the political interest of the state in making citizens loyal to the king (Bezabih, 2019). This calls for "unhistorical consciousness of youth to the historical consciousness of adults…." (Maimire,2010). Moreover, the issue of the use of mother-tongue language, addressing multicultural education, and others call for demand to transform. As a departure from Eurocentric education orientations (or at least as an alternative), Maimire (2010) suggested 'Tezeta' (*nostalgia*) as a philosophy of education. Considering three dimensions of time - past, present, and future towards a desire for Utopia, Mohammed (2012) extends the role of *qal-kidan* (literally means covenant) to reinterpret and balance economic development and restore the spiritual potential for respect and care for nature.

Although the contribution of Amharic to bring national unity as a means of communication for the multiethnic and multilingual community is highly valued, the past rhetoric of Amharic over other languages (Tebeje, 2018) and English over Ethiopian languages as medium of instruction (Tekeste, 2006) demands deconstruction. Thus, it seems true that the use of mother-tongue language is pedagogically sound for learners if it is not served as a point of departure politically and ideologically. We also believe that while respecting diversity, it is better to strengthen our unity through the promotion of bilingual education for unity by diversity rather than diversity by unity for mutual coexistence among citizens.

Metanarrative also presents content selection, objective formation, and method organization. In this regard, Meskerem (2017) argued that curriculum in primary education is mechanical, reductive, and utilitarian unlike holistic endeavors to culturally uplift and humanize individuals. She added the curriculum deemphasizes utopian curricula through fragmented contents by focusing on basic literacy, numeracy, mathematics, and science to realize industrialization and infrastructural expansion in the expense of social studies, music, painting, handicrafts, physical education and home-economics, and merging subjects as 'aesthetic education.

Findings also revealed that curriculum development in Ethiopia is dominantly influenced by positivist thoughts. Providing little emphasis on qualitative inquiry and hermeneutical and phenomenological research, most of the research is quantitative or mixed design, not purely qualitative (Mulugeta, personal communication, August 17, 2022). Pedagogy is another area of

metanarrative indicator in which students are expected to work in an "educational army" after grouping in three ability groups at all levels in Ethiopia regardless of context factors (MoE, 2018) and realizing diverse needs and interests of students (Tadesse, 2020; Tadesse & Sintayehu, 2022). In terms of subject discipline, history is becoming a hot area of debate in metanarrative which calls for the autobiographical presentation of different voices through phenomenological and hermeneutical analysis. Even though attempts are made to include in the current newly designed curriculum (MoE, 2021, 2023), theological texts, art, sculptor and music are not open for discourse in the curriculum due to the secular feature of the policy (MoE, 1994) and the more emphasis for science education than art education (MoE, 2015) despite the tendency to balance them (MoE, 2018, 2023). Still, the curriculum is highly content-based and theory-driven which does not allow students to explore their environment and practically visit and question the establishment of nearby castles, historical settings, rock-hewn churches and monasteries, mosques, and cultural places.

Although there are some attempts made, still the enacted education system does not significantly reflect our identity and culture and link with our indigenous knowledge and local contexts rather destructs our identities and culture; ridicules the introduction of indigenous knowledge, and instills mostly western thoughts. Through the passage of our educational journey, both as a student, teacher, and parent, our rhetoric largely places western civilization through Tylerian tradition. The biggest problem here is, we have the Ethiopian problem but we wish the solution to be brought from the West through the copied western curriculum or education system. Thus, it is time to make education Ethiopianized as the old adage says, "*yehagerun serdo be hageru bere.*" Of course, this argument of inward-looking is not disregarding the integration of indigenous knowledge with 21st century skills.

The Cartesian Dualism or Bifurcations in the Ethiopian Context

Curriculum development issues are surrounded by paradoxes in Ethiopian education such as the utilization of competitiveness over cooperativeness, competence-based approaches over the active learning method, problem-solving behavior over minimum learning competence, and differentiated instruction over cooperative learning. Modern education was introduced as a tool of competition in light of Cartesian dualism in the Ethiopian education system by overlooking cultural capital and assets. The narrative and rhetoric of modern education go with bifurcations such as "civilized versus primitive", "the superior race versus the inferior one", "light versus darkness", "awakening versus sleepiness" and "traditional versus modern" (Messay, 2006). In terms of dualism, Meskerem (2017) also put dualisms in terms of private versus public, individual pursuit versus public good, rich versus poor, modern versus traditional, technology versus nature (subsistence agriculture), foreign versus local, urban versus rural and individual versus communal as a manifestation of the renaissance of the 21st century in Ethiopia. Similarly, in Ethiopian schooling, there is a tradition to divide children into upper and lower groups based on minimum learning competence, gifted and remedial, academic and non-academic, or compliant and behaviorally disordered students. Teachers alike are required to be competent to strive and thrive in a competence-based curriculum (MoE, 2018). Departments and subjects are also bifurcated,

with emphasis on science at the expense of art and aesthetics education (Meskerem, 2017; MoE, 2018) which does not consider the Ethiopian situation.

Similarly, history is another area of bifurcation in curriculum development in Ethiopia, and the area of departure among elites largely depended upon recognizing heroes and heroines of the past and bifurcating the present from the past rather than seeking the interconnection. History in Ethiopia is also presented by considering time as linear, not as a proleptic or cyclical process (the convergence of the past, the present, and future in the synthetical moment, reuniting body, psyche, and spirit), collection of past memory rather than lived experiences (Slattery, 2006). Likewise, Meskerem (2017) considered the division of past from the present and future in the history of Ethiopia as distortive, corruptive, and destructive, dormant and addresses the negative impact of the current political narrative which considers all religious and cultural achievements of the past as results of expansionism, chauvinism or fear. Besides, she promoted students' fluid understanding of the interconnection between the personal and the political, the biological and the cultural rather than reductionist explanations to social and natural phenomena via close-ended official rhetoric texts. In our country, history was viewed only from the political angle, but the social history, economic history, cultural history, water history, etc. was missing.

Also, history is bifurcated ideologically as the Christian history and the Islam history as well as the history of the 'north' and the history of the 'south.' As a result of such bifurcations in ideology and politics, currently, in a country having more than 3000 years of rich history, Ethiopian history is not given as a subject in secondary schools and higher education. Therefore, such misconceptions about the history and culture of Ethiopia need to be challenged through a holistic and integrated model rather than imported models of curricular and pedagogic practices as a pluralist democratic federal state (Tebeje, 2018). In this regard, of course, the corrective measures taken currently by the Ministry of Education's new curriculum development process to assuage this problem are cherished.

Similarly, politics and religion are bifurcated from education by the title of "securer education" despite the long historical connection of the people to different religions. Slattery also proposes that in this postmodern era, the study of politics needs to take an important position in curriculum studies. In the name of "secular education", the Ethiopian education system has long been divorced from addressing or studying the diverse contributions of politics, religion, and cultural and moral values, especially in the Socialist period and EPRDF era. Wittingly and unwittingly, politics and religion continue to affect positively and negatively our education and overall lives. Curriculum development should, therefore, be open for different political perspectives – minority or majority and for religious moral values. Hence, curriculum developers should deconstruct the bifurcation of politics and religion in the Ethiopian education system and stipulate the democratization of the curriculum and covering of the cultivation of democratic culture, tolerance, peaceful resolution of differences through dialogue, and a sense of responsibility towards one's own society on the content.

In terms of objective formulation, learning outcomes are bifurcated into three domains (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor) with the domination of cognitive (Solomon & Aschale, 2019) and from preschool to higher education being dominated by the Tylerian rationale

(Woube, 2014). This Tylerian rationale focuses only on the planned curriculum, but what students learn in school extends beyond the planned curriculum. The linear and planned curriculum translates the school's goals into the subjects that students are expected to learn, the measured objectives of the courses and lessons (often stated in the teachers' unit plans and lesson plans), and the subject's assigned readings. In this regard, student teachers in teacher education colleges express their discontent towards the linearity, mechanical, and rigidity of Tylerian tradition of objectives as stated '*you may feel that life in the college is comfortable for me but my heart is feeble by objective and content'*. However, it is important to challenge a message from an unplanned (informal) and hidden curriculum.

On the other hand, in Ethiopia, despite the promotion of cooperative teaching (*education development army*) rhetorically (MoE, 2018), teaching is dominantly telling and learning is receiving and content and methods are separated not holistic and integrated activities (Joshi &Verspoor, 2013; Tadesse, 2020; Tadesse & Sintayehu, 2022). This education development army also called *one-to-five group arrangement* in schools has mainly served political purposes rather than the academic arena.

In sum, curriculum development scholars deconstruct traditional [indigenous] education (the value of cultural and religious assets including writing, art, music, poetic forms, and numeration system) should be given spaces; helping students to be aware of beliefs and social values of the society (Solomon, 2019); enhancing religious equality, the culture of trust and respect, and positive relations among students (MoE, in Abebaw, 2014); equipping citizens with the wisdom of goodness, discipline, order, tolerance, patriotism, industriousness, and self-control in moral and citizenship education despite the existing gaps and moving towards art education (soft/life skills subjects such as aesthetics, art, music, sport, and vocational skills) in policy initiative (MoE, 2018; 2021). Moreover, rather than bifurcating fields such as natural science or engineering dominating social science (60:40), it is better to take into account the country's contexts, the market, and job opportunities without missing the ecological sustainability of humans and nature.

The Interconnectedness of Individual Experiences in a Global Context

Despite current attempts to make curriculum development eclectic in Ethiopia, it is still noticed as hierarchical, authoritarian, patriarchal, and hegemonic that encompasses educational outcomes outside processes and contexts, and perspectives of people. In the Ethiopian context, it has long been the norm that educational and curricular decisions are being made by the bureaucratic authorities and political leaders at the top (although education is a political activity when different voices are to be heard and presented!). Despite the student-centered at the heart of policy statements and the eclectic nature of curriculum development, the top-down approach still dominates the system (Seyoum, 1996; Akalewold, 2005; MoE, 2018) which calls for practical decentralization and active participation of the necessary stakeholders (MoE, 2018, 2023). In Ethiopia, still the curriculum framework, policy directives, initiatives, implementation strategies, and guidelines are ordered from the top, the Ministry of Education.

Curriculum development in the postmodern era by curriculum developers, as a community of learners, could be viewed as a lifelong journey of learning that may have relevance in Ethiopia as a hermeneutic circle. As one of the researchers of this paper is among the coordinators of the current national curriculum development in Ethiopia, his lived experience witnessed the incorporation of school administrators, parents, and students' voices and the involvement of teachers (actual implementers of the curriculum) are very low although to some extent university subject teachers and curriculum experts are involved in the development of curriculum. So, public discourses through relevant educational stakeholders (teachers, school principals, parents, and students) should be promoted in curriculum development by acknowledging mutually corrective and collaborative rather than being dictated and imposed by the bureaucratic authorities.

The authors also investigated that the influence of the Westerners is still high in curriculum development in Ethiopia either as consultants, technical advisors, donors, or evaluators. Further, they are attempting to indoctrinate their ideology, culture, and language in the curriculum of Ethiopia. Although it has its own merits, the employment of English as a medium of instruction in secondary and tertiary education is a sign of indoctrination and educational crisis in Ethiopia (Tekeste, 2006) and an obstacle to promoting indigenous languages. In Ethiopia, there is a rich, yet untapped indigenous knowledge system, which is neglected by modern education with all its hegemonic features based on postmodern discourse. Accordingly, the global hegemonic forces and our inability to resist those forces have ended in the tragedy of ignoring our rich and old indigenous knowledge system. As a result, we have been indoctrinated for a long time to believe our native and indigenous education system is '*traditional*' and the Western is '*modern*.' Some even consider indigenous knowledge as traditional, outdated, and harmful. Nonetheless, there are several diseases that cannot be treated by modern health services but are treated only by traditional healers. There is very rich agricultural indigenous knowledge, which was neglected by agriculture extension services, inherited from long threshold ancient civilization. There are also ancient buildings and sculpture developments that are not properly favored and treated currently. Accordingly, the current education system needs to address such valuable indigenous resources, link them with the real life of learners, and upgrade them through the application of different technologies.

Curriculum development in the postmodern era also promotes the interconnectedness of all experiences and the importance of the interdependence of ecological sustainability to ameliorate ecological crises (Slattery, 2006). In Ethiopia too, Mulugeta et al. (2020) examined the representation of "nature" and the "environment" and students' perspectives in the official curriculum (textbooks). They found that an anthropocentric view coupled with nature's position could be obtained as an alienated, interdependent and integral part of the natural world by incorporating different outdoor experiences about local, national and global environmental issues.

Curriculum development in the postmodern era also demands transformative pedagogy that promotes cooperation than competition of stakeholders, although sometimes merit-based competition is invigorated. However, in the Ethiopian context, schools are unnecessarily being compared to other schools; the same is true for localities, districts, zones, and regions. This is happening despite the fact that the resource conditions of the different elements are unrelated! The

same is true for universities. Without the significant changes in human and financial resources, currently, Ethiopian universities are compared and stratified as research universities, comprehensive universities, and applied universities (MoE, 2018). People make interconnections in their poems, songs, history, and worshipping (people around nature such as the river (Blue Nile) and public gatherings in festivals such as Epiphany, *Ashendiye, Erecha* and etc. have aesthetical and ecological connections in indigenous education as a prerequisite and assuming the organic nature of Ethiopia (Solomon & Sintayehu, 2020). However, the neoliberal construct of competition should be abandoned and it is better if cooperation is promoted for the mutual ecological sustainability of primary, secondary, and tertiary education if not the dwindling signs of cooperation might disappear!

The Affirmation and Validation of Everyone's Voices in the School Community

One of the missing links of curriculum development in Ethiopia is less engagement of the public which makes different voices peripheral. Policy initiatives and formation are developed behind the curtain, not unveiled. Curriculum development in particular and policy formation in general appears central (Seyoum, 1996; MoE, 2018). Ethiopia is a pluralistic nation with diverse political, historical, ethnic, and linguistic groups which calls forth a postmodern perspective of curriculum understanding including community empowerment models rather than the dominant hierarchical power position to affirm and validate everyone's voice in the school community and promote meaningfully. In this regard, gender is one of the areas of educational debate in Ethiopia and policy empowers females to fill the historical gap at different levels despite not being well articulated (MoE, 1994, 2010, 2015, 2021, 2023). Also, the bifurcation of the center (hegemonic) position from the periphery (marginal position) manifests itself in the language of instruction and in the distribution of educational institutions in ethnic lines (Tebeje, 2018). As a result, dualism in gender and language is becoming a source of conflict in universities and across the nation. An excerpt from Haile Selassie I's speech at the League of Nations (and later sung by the famous Bob Marley) reads: "…until the philosophy which holds one race superior, and another inferior, is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned, everywhere is war…." We believe it is animals' nature to dominate one over the other; a bigger and stronger animal kicks a weaker one of the same species or another for the purpose of getting food, drink, space, or mating right.

In a hermeneutical journey, the underrating of theology in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (Mohammed, 2012) and the peacefully coexisting Judaism Christianity, Islam and indigenous and African religions in Ethiopia might have an impact in curriculum development. However, if properly and fairly applied, religious thoughts and social beliefs can help citizens to develop good moral character and values. In other words, there are alternatives to bridge the historic gaps through transformation by awakening students with the civilizing process of church, mosque, *gada,* and other native, cultural, and religious education systems in Ethiopia (Maimire, 2006) rather than detaching religion, indigenous knowledge and culture to the secular school system (Zewde, in Tesfaye, 2014) and neglecting discussion of religion-related and ethnic-related issues with religious and ethnic out-group members, and the resulted prevalence of ethnic and religious tensions and conflicts in Ethiopian higher institution (Abebaw, 2014).

Postmodern thinkers in curriculum study challenge any rejection of 'traditional education' as indoctrination, accusing of worldly life, impeding the advancement of science and technology (Teshome, 1979); as destructing earthly life and spiritual asset; and negligence of currere as autobiographical in Ethiopia (Solomon & Sintayehu, 2020). So, the curriculum does give room for Ethiopian elements (knowledge, culture, and history) (Tekeste, 1996) and revisiting the role of women including diplomatic and administrative throughout Ethiopian history as wives, queen mothers, and regents (Tebeje, 2018) through open dialogue in the context of moral discourses about female sexuality and convenient environment (Meselu et al., 2014).

Understanding of the Complexity of Metaphysics - chaos and uncertainty

Ethiopia passes a millennium with rich religious history despite less recognition given in modern education in Ethiopia. Curriculum development in postmodernism should follow an open system that involves lived experience and chaos theory and a divergent path rather than following the closed systems of Tyler's rationale. Still, the Ethiopian curriculum development is assumed to be central, planned, segmented, controlled, and manipulated in objectives, activities, and instructional time through aspiring to standard and competency in Ethiopia, regardless of analyzing the contexts and contingency of different localities (MoE, 2018). Instruction time, waiting time (off-task), and allocating more time in primary and secondary education is a manifestation of linear consideration of time (MoE, 2018).

Of course, at least rhetorically, postmodern issues such as the cultures within nations and nationalities in the country, special learning needs, environmental matters, civics, and ethical values, gender equality, HIV/AIDS are included in the curriculum and in the promotion of participatory, decentralized, contextual, localized curriculum development, and student-centered approaches are articulated in attaining minimum learning competence (MoE, 2009a) and standardizations are maximized and flourished in public discourses (MoE, 2023; Tadesse, 2020). Rhetorically, the policy document also acknowledges the linkage between traditional and modern education. One of the articles states that "curriculum developed and textbooks prepared…give due attention to concrete local conditions…." and "traditional education will be improved and developed by integrating it with modern education" (MoE, 1994, pp. 12 & 26). Although this view is accompanied by the new education policy (MoE, 2023), the benchmark is still not local and indigenous but either Western or Eastern (MoE, 2018). In order to introduce sustainable quality and lifelong education in Ethiopia, nurturing indigenous knowledge and linking it with modern thoughts in a harmonious and open manner is vital rather than only following a rigid Taylerian rationale.

An attempt to shift from the modern or Tyler's objective model (Feleke, 1990) to the postmodern or economic development factory model (the rows of desks teaching) (Meskerem, 2017) to a seminar circle in the classroom teaching stimulates the promotion and celebration of the interconnectedness of knowledge, prior learning experiences, international communities, the natural world and life itself (Tadesse, 2021; Tadesse & Sintayehu, 2022). The Ethiopian education system emphasizes using the river metaphor of the linear paradigm at the expense of reflective dialogue, the use of autobiography, debate, cooperative investigation, and probing questions in a

holistic environment by focusing on learning and self-in ecological and holistic theories of curriculum and instruction. Hence, curriculum developers in Ethiopia should consider curriculum as kaleidoscopic (eclectic, changing image patterns in context - a web of ideas with changing) rather than telescopic (condensing) and microscopic (enlarging) systems which result in the demoralization of learners.

Concluding Remarks and Implications

Concluding Remarks

This article is envisioned to review the Ethiopian education and curriculum development experiences based on the five guiding principles of Slattery's postmodern thoughts.   Curriculum development in the Ethiopian education system including policy documents, policy initiatives, education sector programs, and curriculum frameworks has faced limitations and strengths when reviewed vis-à-vis Slattery's five principles. It is possible to smoothly deduce that still there is the domination of influence of western culture in Ethiopian curriculum development. The Cartesian dualism of western thoughts and the Tylerian rationale metanarrative as a result of a tendency of '*seeking the western solution to the Ethiopian problem*'; bifurcation of students in ability groups; bifurcation of learning outcomes; rhetorical equity of woman and man, rural and urban, and peripheral and central; bifurcations of our education system into '*traditional*' and '*modern*'; the misconceptions and misinterpretations of Ethiopian history by different actors and not considering its proleptic process; historically, the negligence of different voices (mainly education professionals) in curriculum development; and the repudiation of important cultural values, religious thoughts and varied political issues divorcing from the education system by claiming secular education calls for post-structural and deconstructive discursive and analysis. Besides, neglect of indigenous knowledge and cultural values for modern education or the detachment of indigenous and value education from Ethiopian schooling; row seating rather than a circle as rigid and linear consideration of instructional time; the merging of cooperative learning (often called *one to five*) over competence and minimum learning competence; low emphasis is given to aesthetics and ecology which Ethiopia is alleged to be the cradle of ancient art and wisdom are areas of deconstruction in postmodern issues that Ethiopian curriculum development process need to address. Competitiveness and cooperativeness overlapped in the education system from kindergarten to grade twelve unlike daily manifestations of circling in dining and house building in Ethiopian culture.

Implications

A call for shifting from modernism to postmodernism should deconstruct the historical upheaval of the curriculum in terms of public discourses, such as lack of relevance, equity, quality, access, and ideology through revisiting curriculum as an area of inquiry (Woube, 2014), as practical (Solomon & Aschale, 2019) and contextual and sensitive to specific and indigenous knowledge (Tadesse, 2020). The writers of the present manuscript want to challenge modernism which has brought some bad and some good news to Ethiopian education using deconstructivism

and post-structural philosophy, not as a singular method but as an alternative to describing rich aesthetical, theological, historical, and political [realities] for egalitarian/utopian and astronomical context that considers curriculum developers, as community learners.

Despite there are wide historical and contextual differences both in interpretation and understanding of modernism and postmodernism, educators need to connect their past experience with their present through Ethiopian education philosophy *tizita* (nostzia) (Maimire, 2006) and both *tizita* and *qalkidan* (Mohammed, 2012) and by making content relevant to human, nature, and environment (Mulugeta et al., 2020) and move towards our ideal Utopia/Ethiopian (Meskerem, 2017).

Consequently, the following remarks are useful as far as curriculum development in Ethiopian education in the aftermath of new millennium to critically reconceptualize and take into consideration different voices and contexts: (1) The influence of western education needs to be critically challenged with its all consequences; (2) The integration of indigenous and modern education has to be deconstructed by comprising the voices of all the necessary actors what Slattery called '*the community of learners*'; (3) There needs to be open mindedness by all actors to question, challenge and view Ethiopian history afresh and integrate holistically in different disciplines, including all the victims and heroes in fair lenses; (4) It is interesting to provide curriculum as Theological and Political text in Ethiopia both as constructive and deconstructive using hermeneutical sense (Ethiopia has rich science of textual interpretation in *Abinet* schools and *Deresa* schools) to promote religious tolerance justifying the country as home of diversity and tolerance before modernity; (5) Curriculum theory and inquiry be understood aesthetically and ecologically since Ethiopia is believed to be womb of ancient wisdom, art and indigenous knowledge, and deconstructing the social ecology of Ethiopia using the home-grown (indigenous) solutions is crucial; (6) Education in general and curriculum development in particular need to open room for thinking ways of development without violating human and environmental ecosystem; and (7) As a philosophy, revisiting the rationale model and viewing curriculum as currere, Ethiopian curriculum and pedagogy should not simply be directed toward preparing students for a career (a preparation for a future life) rather, it should be, as Dewey wrote, "an experience of life itself" (Dewey, 1938) by promoting interconnection rather than bifurcation.

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The Effect of Transformational Leadership, Teachers' Openness to Experience and Gender on Innovative Work Behavior in Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of transformational leadership, openness to experience and gender on innovative work behavior in higher education institutions found in Amahara National Regional State. Among ten public universities, Bahir Dar, Gondar, Wollo, Debre Tabor and Debark were selected using a lottery sampling technique. Using G*power, from 1,726 teachers, 550 of them were selected as sample of the study. Data was collected through questionnaire and analyzed by structural equation modeling and Hayes PROCESS Macro. The results reveled that the positive influence of transformational leadership on innovative work behavior is mediated by openness to experience. The results also depicted that gender did not moderate the indirect effect of transformational leadership on innovative work behavior. Therefore, it can be concluded that the indirect effect of deans' transformational leadership on teachers' innovative work behavior is not conditional as a function of gender. This finding provides an empirically supported knowledge to explain how transformational leadership influences innovative work behavior in higher education contexts.

Introduction

In the ever challenging and competitive environment, innovative work behaviour among teachers is central in making higher educational institutions successful. Supporting this, researchers (e.g., De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010; George & Zhou, 2001; Janssen, 2000) noted that teachers' innovative work behaviour (IWB) has major impact on the development and application of educational innovations. West and Farr (1990) defined IWB as "the intentional introduction and

application within a role, group or organization of ideas, processes, products or procedures" (p. 9). This implies that teachers who engaged in IWB can generate innovative pedagogies, services, processes or products to bring successful changes in the education system.

Thurlings, Evers, and Vermeulen (2014) argued that IWB is necessary to keep up with a rapidly changing environment. It is a prerequisite for future new technological teaching and research. They add that educational institutions act as sources for more innovative behaviours of other institutions to stay competitive. This suggests that teacher's IWB is vital in capitalizing innovation which leads higher education systems to maintain their importance towards educational development and quality education.

Studies (Klaeijsen, Vermeulen, & Martens, 2018; Kundu & Roy, 2016; Park, Song, Yoon, & Kim, 2014) have proven that IWB is influenced by individual, demographic and organizational factors. In this regard, researchers (e.g., Carmeli, Meitar & Weisberg, 2006; Loogma, Kruusvall & Umarik. 2012; Messmann & Mulder, 2011) contributed useful insights into the individual, demographic or organizational determinants of teachers' IWB. Thurlings et al. (2014) indicated that these factors were mostly studied separately and the interaction effect among them is still unexplored. In addition, Park et al. (2014) point out that while various antecedents of IWB have been studied, specific evidence on how individual, organizational and demographic factors influence IWB remains inconclusive and incomplete. Supporting this, Thurlings et al. (2014) in their meta-analysis confirm that no attempt so far has been made to conduct a study taking into account the variety of demographic, individual, and organizational factors related to teachers IWB. Although understanding these determinants of IWB is worthwhile, a study on explaining the interaction effects of these factors on IWB is necessary. Furthermore, as the best knowledge of the researchers, there is no research on the antecedents, specifically, the combined effects of transformational leadership, openness to experience and gender as determinants of teachers IWB in Ethiopian public higher education institutions (HEIs).

Transformational leadership (TL) is one of the most important organizational factors that influence teachers' IWB (Jung, Chow, & Wu, 2003). Some studies found that TL has positive effect on teachers' IWB (Berraies & Zine El Abidine, 2019); however, other studies revealed that TL does not have a significant direct effect on IWB (Jacobsen & Andersen, 2017). In this regard, Groves (2020) suggested that very little empirical research explains the mediating mechanisms through which TL style yields such pronounced influences and TL research is often criticized for failing to account for the moderating effects of other variables. This implies that many of the crucial questions of TL theory regarding the mediating role of openness to experience and the moderating role of gender lack empirical research evidence. This requires further investigations.

While TL is assumed to be practiced at different echelon of management in HEIs, the current research focused on the middle level management positions occupied by college deans. There are three arguments regarding the contributions of middle level management on innovation. The first argument is middle level managers lack sufficient potential. Supporters of this view reported that middle level managers cannot challenge the status quo rather they stick to the existing arrangements in the organization (Griffith, Baur & Buckley 2019; Hout, 1999); thereby become barriers to innovations (Koene, 2017). The proponents of the second view argued that middle level

managers are not necessary in organizational innovation. In this regard, Munteanu and Raţiu (2018) claimed that organizations require mentors rather than middle level managers; Sims (2003) concluded that middle managers are barriers to innovation. This may lead to less attention for middle managers in their contribution to innovation efforts (Hermkens & Romme, 2020)

On the contrary, the third view noted the importance of middle level managers by labelling them as bridge between top management and supervisory management (Hermkens et al. 2019) bringing important effect on innovation (Balogun 2003; Balogun & Johnson, 2004). Researches (Currie & Procter, 2005; Realin & Cataldo, 2011; Tabrizi, 2014) suggested that college deans, as middle level managers, play a decisive role on innovation by stimulating teachers to challenge their practices and search for new approaches to perform their duties. Similarly, Astin and Astin (2000) indicated that deans have important influences on the success of their college by creating a supportive environment where teachers can grow and thrive. Hermkens, Dolmans and Romme (2019) argued that deanship is the critical management position between university presidents and teachers. This position is instrumental in triggering the thinking and doing functions of management systemically (Hermkens & Romme, 2020). This suggests that deans may bridge the gap between teachers and presidents as they are required to be sources of innovation to remain competent in the global environment.

Although the significance of top-level managers in promoting innovation has been acknowledged (Chiaroni, Chiesa & Frattini, 2011; Zhao, Li & Yu, 2021), the fundamental role played by college deans in innovation process has been mostly ignored. In this regard, Conway and Monks (2011) noted that the central role played by middle level managers like college deans in innovation process is generally overlooked. In supporting this idea, Bekalu and Wossenu (2012) indicated that while deans' leadership is among the important factors for institutional success, there is little empirical study that measures deans' effectiveness in Ethiopia's HEIs.

The extent to which teachers engage in IWB is not only determined by their professional skills and knowledge, but also is impacted by their inclination to innovation and leadership support (Park et al. 2014; Yesil & Sozbilir, 2013). In order to understand more about the significance of these factors, as well as their interaction, this study takes a different position that having the objective of examining the extent to which teachers develop, promote, and implement new ideas to improve educational practices is crucial. In other words, it focuses on the impact of interaction aspects of TL, OE and gender on IWB.

Taking in to account the foregoing research gaps, the current study examined the effect of transformational leadership, openness to experience and gender on innovative work behaviour in public universities found in Amhara National Regional State. Accordingly, the following hypotheses were proposed.

H1: Transformational leadership has a direct effect on teachers' innovative work behaviour.

H2: Openness to experience mediates the effect of transformational leadership on teachers' innovative work behaviour.

H3: Gender moderates the indirect effect of transformational leadership on innovative work behaviour through openness to experience with the mediation effect being stronger for males.

Transformational Leadership and Innovative Work Behaviour

Among the many organizational factors, leadership is acknowledged as one of the most important factors that influence teachers' IWB (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010; Ebrahimi, Moosavi and Chirani, 2016; Pundt, 2015). Similarly, Carmeli, Gelbard and Reiter-Palmon (2013) argued that innovation is more likely successful if educational leaders aggressively involve in the innovation process. Park et al. (2014) also demonstrated that if teachers' IWB are to be systematically stimulated, leadership that supports innovation is essential.

Bryman (2007) confirmed that there is little empirical research addressing the leadership styles associated with higher education. Black (2015) noted the inadequacy of the traditional leadership (e.g. transactional leadership) in higher education contexts. Aytaged (2014) suggested that such type of leadership styles in higher education face challenges due to the dynamic social, political, economic and technological changes. Aligning with Aytaged's argument, Amey (2006) and Astin and Astin (2000) noted that TL is needed to address HEIs challenges in the turbulent and competitive environments. Moreover, Buller (2015) argued that the most important task for leaders in higher education is to spend their time creating a culture of innovation. Burns (2013) concludes that TL is a relevant approach for higher education institutions in transforming them to their central mission.

Bass and Raggio (2006) also noted that TL tends to have more committed teachers as well as pay attention to teachers' personal development. Various researches (Aryee, Walumbwa, Zhou & Hartnell, 2012; Li, Zhao, & Begley, 2015; Shin & Zhou, 2003) demonstrated a positive relationship between TL and IWB. For example, studies conducted by Afsar and Masood (2017) and Pieterse et al. (2010) showed that TL has positive and statistically significant effect on IWB. Furthermore, research by Jung, Chow, and Wu (2003) confirmed that TL behaviours affect teacher's innovativeness. Researchers (Elkins & Keller, 2003; Shin & Zhou, 2003) argued that transformational leaders increase teachers' intrinsic motivation which in turn stimulates creativity and encourage teachers to think "outside of the box". These researchers further obtained that transformational leaders primarily encourage teachers' creativity by providing an environment that supports teachers' innovative efforts. This implies that in order to promote significant educational innovations in HEIs deans should demonstrate TL behaviours that inspire teachers to generate new ideas and products.

Openness to Experience as Mediator

Though TL has positive effect on IWB, Afsar, Masood and Umrani (2019) argued that the way TL influences IWB has not been adequately researched and relatively little attention has been given to the mechanism of the relationship between TL and IWB (Kahai, Sosik, & Avolio, 2003). Similarly, researchers (Gong, Huang & Farth, 2009; Choi, Kim, Ullah & Kang, 2016) noted that explaining the underlying mechanism through which TL influences IWB is essential. This requires further study and the consideration of openness to experience (OE) as a mediator may explain the link between TL and IWB. This mediation effect denotes how IWB is influenced by TL through a causal sequence as a result of which TL influences OE which in turn influences IWB (Hayes, 2022).

OE is defined as the tendency of teachers to be creative, imaginative, curious, independent thinkers, unconventional, and thoughtful (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The success of educational innovations depends hugely on teachers' involvement to generate and realize innovations. However, teachers vary significantly from each other in terms of their willingness and potential to innovate (Hammond, Neff, Farr, Schwall, & Zhao, 2011). Therefore, studying individual differences is of great importance in order to understand individual behaviour towards innovation (Yesil, & Sozbilir, 2013).

Empirical research findings disclose that TL positively influences OE. For example, Zainab, Akbar and Siddiqui (2022) revealed that TL has positive effect on openness to change. Similarly, Yue, Men and Ferguson (2019) in their study "Bridging transformational leadership, transparent communication, and employee openness to change" show that TL was positively associated with OE. Furthermore, Groves (2020) illustrated a strong evidence for the positive and significant relationship between TL and OE.

In addition, various researchers explained the positive relationship between OE and IWB. Munir and Beh (2016) in their study on "Do personality traits matter in fostering innovative work behaviour" reveal that one of the big five personality factors, OE had a positive significant relationship with IWB. Similarly, Feist (1998) in his meta-analysis also illustrates that of the Five-Factor traits, OE has the strongest relationship with creativity and the results further show that teachers who are open to new experiences are more innovative. Studies (Coellho, Lages & Sousa, 2018; Hammond, et. al, 2011; Madrid, Patterson, Birdi, Leiva & Kausel, 2014; Niu, 2014; Patterson, Kerrin, & Gatto-Roissard, 2009) found that teacher's OE positively and significantly influences IWB. Feist's (2010) study also indicated that OE was the most consistent and stable predictor of IWB. Furthermore, Raja and Johns' (2010) work on "The effect of personality on creativity" revealed that OE was the only dimension with a significant effect on creativity.

Similarly, George and Zhou (2001) in their quantitative study on the relationship of openness to experience and conscientiousness to creative behaviour found that teachers who are high on OE possess a broader range and depth of experience, and more of an appreciation of the merits of new ways of doing things and the potential for improving and changing the status quo, than individuals who have low OE. In a similiar vein Scott and Bruce (1994) obtained that teachers who are open-minded generate new ideas that may promote IWB.

From the mentioned emprical evidences, it is vividly seen that TL significantly influences OE. In addition, OE influences IWB. This implies that the effect of TL on IWB may be transmitted through OE. In other words, TL affects IWB because TL affects OE, and OE, in turn, affects IWB. The current researchers, therefore, assume that OE serves as a mediator in the relationship between deans' TL and teachers' IWB. As a result, In order to employ mediation analysis according to Baron and Kenny(1986), association between TL and IWB is not a sufficient condition. Researchers need two more conditions: 1) TL should predict OE without the inclusion of IWB in the model and 2) OE should predict IWB in the mediation model.

Gender as Moderator

The issue of gender and innovation has been a hot agenda in modern organizations. Alsos, Hytti and Ljunggren (2013) revealed that the notion of gender recently gained attention among researchers in the area of innovation. While researchers suggest numerous contextual variables that moderate the effects of TL (Groves, 2020; Pieterse, Knippenberg, Schippers & Stam, 2010; Walumbwa, Lawler, Avolio, Wang, & Kan, 2005), no study explored the moderating effect of gender on the prediction of IWB by OE. In this study, gender functions not in a causal role, but as a moderator that influences the strength of the link between OE and IWB. When one is testing the relationship between OE and IWB in this moderated mediation study, it is vital to account for the moderating role of gender in the indirect effects of TL on IWB.

It is mentioned that of the big five dimensions of personality OE is most related to IWB. However, to get a better understanding of the relationship between OE and IWB, the current study considered gender as a boundary condition. Newnham (2016) pointed out that though there are female scientists, inventors, designers and artists that are contributing their share tackling some of the world's most complex problems through innovation, many studies found that male teachers are considered more innovative than their female counterparts. The studies of Dautzenberg, (2012) and Marlow & McAdam (2011) also confirmed that a strong association between maleness and innovation. Similarly, Bozeman and Gaughan (2007) and Panagiotis (2016) revealed that males are more effective innovators than females. This suggests that males are much more likely to be concerned about innovation.

The other issue, which has received little attention, is the extent to which gender serves as a moderator of the relationship between TL, OE, and IWB. Although studies have examined gender differences in innovation, further investigation of whether gender serves as a moderator would have practical significances. Costa, Terracciano and McCrae (2001) found that men as being more assertive and open to new ideas. On the contrary, Winstead, Derlega, and Unger (1999) noted that people characterized females as guided by emotion and concerned about how openness will be enhanced and use that openness to generate new ideas. These concerns may bring unwillingness to be open minded and participate in innovative activities. This suggest that the effect of OE on IWB is likely to weaken for females. In line with these evidences, the current researchers assume that the interaction effect of openness and gender influences the indirect effect of TL on IWB.

The study gives a novel contribution to innovation literature because no previous research has examined the effect of TL, OE and gender on IWB in the higher education contexts. Therefore, this study presents new insights into this field by integrating the study variables into one framework. In other words, the positive influence of leadership styles on teachers' innovative behavior could be subject to the development of teachers' quality of openness to new perspectives and challenges. In this sense, this study filled the knowledge gap through highlighting the link between TL and IWB and presented empirical evidence for policy makers and leaders to focus directly on nurturing teachers' openness to innovation in HEIs.

The result of this research will provide valuable information for policy makers and planners on how to promote teachers' IWB in HEIs. In addition, the results provide information to deans to

realize the significance of their leadership in innovation process. As a result, they will be encouraged to promote teachers' IWB in bringing successful changes in the education system.

This study has also delimitations. There are private and government higher education institutions in Ethiopia. But the study was delimited to public universities found in Amhara National Regional State. Although students, leaders, and other staff need to be part of the study, this study was delimited to teachers' perspective.

Based on the above empirical and theoretical descriptions, the researchers developed the following moderated mediation conceptual framework.
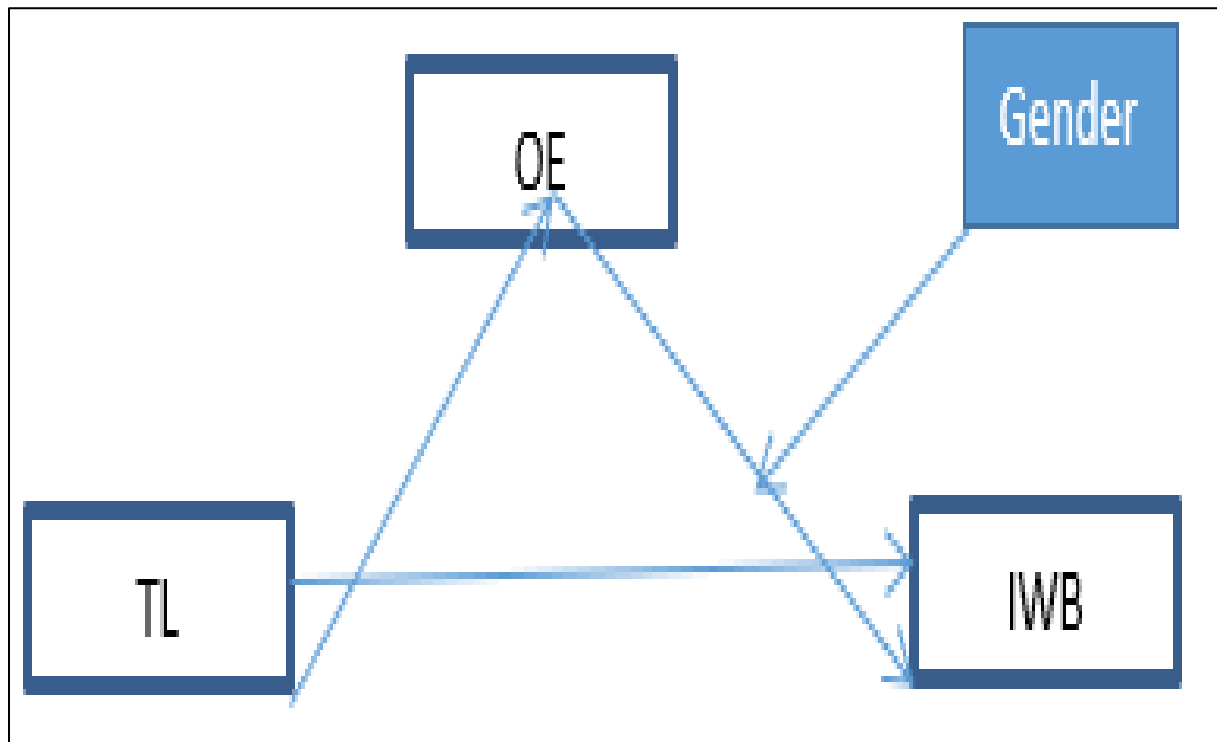
Figure 1

Proposed Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 exhibits the expected relationship among TL, OE, gender and IWB. In this regard, the conceptual framework was developed with TL as the independent variable, IWB as the dependent variable, OE as a mediator, and gender as moderator. It is further displayed that TL influences teachers' IWB. This implies that the more deans practice TL, the better teachers will be engaged in innovative activities. In addition, two independent variables that influence teachers' IWB are included in the conceptual framework. OE is used as mediator variable to link TL and IWB, in explaining the relationship between them better. In this model, OE helps explain why TL leads to a higher IWB. The more deans demonstrate TL style, the more teachers become open to new idea; and the more teachers become open to new idea, the higher teachers' engagement in

innovation will be. Finally, gender is added as moderator to influence the indirect effect of TL on IWB through OE.

Methods

Sample

Since the study aimed at examining the effect of TL, OE and gender on IWB a quantitative descriptive survey research design was employed. It is a suitable research design as the researchers aimed at explaining the perception of large participants. Furthermore, it was cross-sectional survey research as data was collected from teachers at a specific time interval in examining the nature of relationships between a dependent variable and independent variables.

There were ten public universities in Amhara National Regional State. Among these, five of them were chosen as research unit of the study using lottery sampling technique. The universities included were Bahir Dar, Gondar, Wollo, Debre Tabor and Debark. Twenty colleges (four colleges from each university) were selected by employing random sampling technique as it gives equal chances to be part of the study. The population of this study were 1,726 teachers who had at least two years teaching experience in the university they are working in. This exclusion and inclusion of teachers' teaching experiences may help teachers have better exposure in reflecting on what is happening in the colleges related to the issues under study.

G*power Software analysis was applied as a tool to compute sample size. An a priori analysis sample size calculation was computed before conducting the study. It was used to calculate the sample size which was necessary to determine the effect size, desired α level, and power level. Using a test family with F-test and a statistical test with alpha error (α=0. 05), effect size (small) =0.02 and power (1-β error) =0.80, from a total population of 1,716 teachers, the minimum adequate sample size 550 teachers were taken as participants of the study. Table 1 illustrated that through proportionate stratified random sampling technique 156 teachers from Bahir Dar, 189 teachers from Gondar, 72 from Debre Tabor, 66 from Wollo, and 67 from Debark universities were taken as sample of the study.

Table 1

Population and Sample Size of the Study

Universities	Population			Sample Size		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Bahir Dar	298	189	487	95	61	156
Gondar	368	221	589	118	71	189
Wollo	109	97	206	35	31	66
Debre Tabor	143	82	225	46	26	72
Debark	111	98	209	36	31	67
Total	1,029	687	1,716	330	220	550

Data source. From survey (2022)

Measures

In order to collect data a questionnaire that composed a total of 58 items was used. All the items were open ended types Accordingly, IWB was measured by De Jong and Den Hartong (2010) standardized questionnaire with ten items. The questionnaire reflects four underlying dimensions (*idea exploration*, *idea generation*, *idea promotion and idea realization*) using a 5-point Likert-type scale 1 = Never to 5 = always. A sample item was "I search new ways of instructional strategies to deliver courses". The items were subject to CFA and the results show an acceptable fit to the one factor model.

Bass and Avolio (2000) standardized Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Form 5X was applied to measure TL. This questionnaire comprises 20 items in which teachers rate the extent to which they agree whether deans display TL on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 =Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree (e.g., the dean encourages you to look at problems from different angles; the dean considers the moral and ethical consequences of decisions). The results of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) show an acceptable fit to the one- factor model. Finally, OE was measured using items developed by Costa and McCrae (1992). Teachers were presented with 10 items in the OE scale, and were asked to indicate their level of agreement about how accurately each statement describes them (e.g., I am curious for new ideas; I am imaginative). Items were rated using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 =never to 5 =always. The results of CFA showed an acceptable fit to the one-factor model.

Data Analysis

Structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis technique was used to examine the effect of TL, OE, and gender on IWB. In the analysis, SPSS Amos 26 software program was applied. Furthermore, PROCESS macro model 14 was used to investigate the moderated effect of gender on the indirect impact of TL on IWB through OE. According to Hayes (2022), "moderated mediation analysis is used when the analytical goal is to describe the conditional nature of the mechanism by which a variable transmits its effect on another (p. 409)." This conditional indirect effect quantifies how differences in TL map onto differences in IWB indirectly through OE depending on the type of the moderator(gender). Finally, the Index of moderated mediation was tested with a 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval based on 5,000 replications. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients. In addition, conditions for moderators are the mean and plus or minus one standard deviation from the mean.

Results

Prior to data analysis, missing data and outliers were checked and corrected. To drop multivariate outliers, data were examined using a Mahalanobis distance test. The linear relationship between predictors and criterion variables of this study was checked using scatter plot of standardised residuals against each of the predictor variables in the regression model. Multivariate normality was checked using Normal P-P plot. This plot helped determine whether

the data set was normally distributed. The assumption of multi-collinearity was also assured by variance inflation factors and tolerance values. In addition, to check the assumption of autocorrelation, Durbin-Watson statistic was employed. Finally, homoscedasticity was checked by examining whether the variance of the residuals is constant or not through visualization of the standardised residual and standardised predicted values plot. Accordingly, seven outliers were identified and removed. Next, the assumptions of structural equation modelling namely: linearity, multivariate normality, multicollinearity, autocorrelation and homoscedasticity were checked. The results suggest that the entire assumptions have been met.

Prior to testing specific hypothesis, Cronbach alpha, means, standard deviations and correlations were examined. The results in Table 2 show that TL correlates with OE (r=.480, p<.05) and witn IWB (r=.313, p<.05). It was also revealed that OE was correlated with IWB (r=.533, p<.05). The results further suggest that all the possible inter-correlations were significantly and positively correlated with each other. This shows that teachers with high scores on OE tend to have higher scores on IWB compared to those with lower scores on OE. This scenario has the implication that college deans who display TL behaviors can promote teachers' IWB. The Cronbach's alpha for TL, OE and IWB were .918, .840 and .918 respectively.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Pearson's Correlations

	α	Mean	SD	1	2	3
TL(1)	.960	54.73	14.73			
OE(2)	.840	31.48	6.63	.313*		
IWB(3)	.918	19.103	3.11	.480*	.533*	

Note. N=543, p*< .05(2-tailed)

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

A Principal Axis Factor with a Varimax (orthogonal) rotation was conducted on data gathered from 543 participants. An investigation of Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy illustrates that the sample was factorable as Kaiser-Meyer Olkin values range between 0.891 to 0.964. When loadings less than 0.30 were excluded, the analysis produced seven-factor solution, namely: charismatic leadership, innovative leadership, openness to internal experience, openness to external experience, opportunity exploration, idea generation and idea implementation.

Before assessing the measurement and structure models, the researchers evaluated construct validity of the hypothesized model. In order to assess the convergent validity of the latent variables, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each variable was computed. Kline (2011) suggests that in order to endorse a measurement model for convergent validity, the AVE must be .5 or greater. In line with this, the results illustrate that the AVE of TL, IWB, and OE values fall in the range of .57 to .74 which are greater than the acceptable value of .5. This implies that all the

constructs in the current study satisfied the issue of convergent validity revealing that the indicators of each measurement model are sufficient to represent the respective constructs.

Next, discriminant validity of the constructs was checked through Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion of discriminant validity called square root of AVE. The square roots of AVE of the latent variables were less than the inter factor correlation coefficients between them. For example, the square root of AVE for the charismatic leadership (.64) and innovative leadership (.63) were less than the inter factor correlation coefficient between them(r=.87). In addition, the square root of AVE for the openness to internal experience (.838) and openness to internal experience (.786) were less than the inter factor correlation coefficient between them(r=.944) indicating that discriminant validity was a concern in this study. Therefore, it can be concluded that the model did not satisfy discriminant validity criterion.

In order to improve the discriminant validity of such type of models, Brown (2006) and Farrell and Rudd (2009) suggest combining the constructs into a single construct to solve poor discriminant validity. Accordingly, charismatic leadership and innovative leadership were merged as single TL latent variable which is consistent with the conceptualization of Tejeda, Scandura, and Pillai (2001) and Tracey and Hinkin (1998) findings that the 4 components of TL are not distinct. Openness to internal experience and openness to external experience were merged as one OE latent variable which is inconsistent with the conceptualization of DeYoung, Quilty and Peterson (2007). Finally, opportunity exploration, idea generation and idea implementation were combined as one IWB latent variable that invalidated the conceptualization of Janssen's (2000) as three factors. In conclusion, in the current research three constructs: transformational leadership, innovative work behavior and openness to experience were developed.

In SEM analysis, the measurement model and structural model were examined for model fit. The measurement model deals with the relationship between the latent variables and indicators. Accordingly, the current study established a good measurement model fit for key concepts using latent variables (see Table 3). The hypothesized measurement model was tested and the results of overall Fit indexes illustrate a good fit (CMIN/df=3.2<.01, RMSEA=.06, IFI=.921, TLI=.921, CFI=.920). The control variables included in the SEM analysis were age and education level because they were considered as important factors that may influence teachers' behaviors. Since the measurement model showed a good fit to the data, analysis continued to validate the structural model (see Table 2). The results of the overall fit indexes demonstrate a good fit for the model (X^2/df=3.20, <.01; RMSEA=.06, CFI=.924, IFI=.924, TFI=.915). Therefore, it can be concluded that the data met the proposed theoretical expectations regarding the structural validity of the constructs under study.

Table 3

Recommended and Actual Model Fit Indices

Fit index	Recommended Value	Measurement Model	Structural Model
CMIN/df	<5 Preferable<3	3.20	3.20
IFI	>0.90	.921	.924
CFI	>0.90	.920	.924
TLI	>0.90	.912	.915
RMSEA	<0.08	.06	.06

Note. p < .01, IFI = incremental Fit Index, CFI =Comparative Fit Index, TLI = Tucker Lewis Index, RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation

Direct Effects

To investigate the direct effect of TL on IWB (H1), SEM analysis was conducted. The results in Table 2 demonstrate that TL had a positive and statistically significant direct effect on IWB (β = .37, p <.001). Thus, hypothesis 1 was supported. The results also show that TL was positively associated with OE (β = .34, p <.001). In addition, OE has a statistically significant effect on IWB when controlling for TL (β = .44, p <.001). The analysis also generates a significant total effect of TL on IWB (β = .52, p <.001). This suggests that deans who display TL behaviors are likely to promote teachers' IWB.

Mediation Analysis

In order to examine the indirect effect of OE in the relationship between TL and IWB a mediation analysis was conducted (H$_2$). The results in Table 4 revealed that TL significantly influenced OE (β = .34, p <.001) and OE in turn influenced IWB (β = .44, p <.001). Moreover, it is shown that TL indirectly influenced IWB (β = .15, p <.001). The results show the relationship between TL and IWB is partially explained by the mediating role of OE. Thus, hypothesis 2 was supported. This suggests that deans' TL not only directly influences teachers' IWB but also indirectly influences IWB through OE.

Table 4

Regression Coefficient to Predict IWB

	B	SE	CR	P
OE ← TL	.34	.042	7.6	.001
IWB ← TL	.38	.038	9.8	.001
IWB ← OE	.44	.038	12.1	.001
IWB ← OE ← TL	.15	.025	5.00	.002
Total Effect	.53	.033	10.83	.002

Note. N=543, P<.05
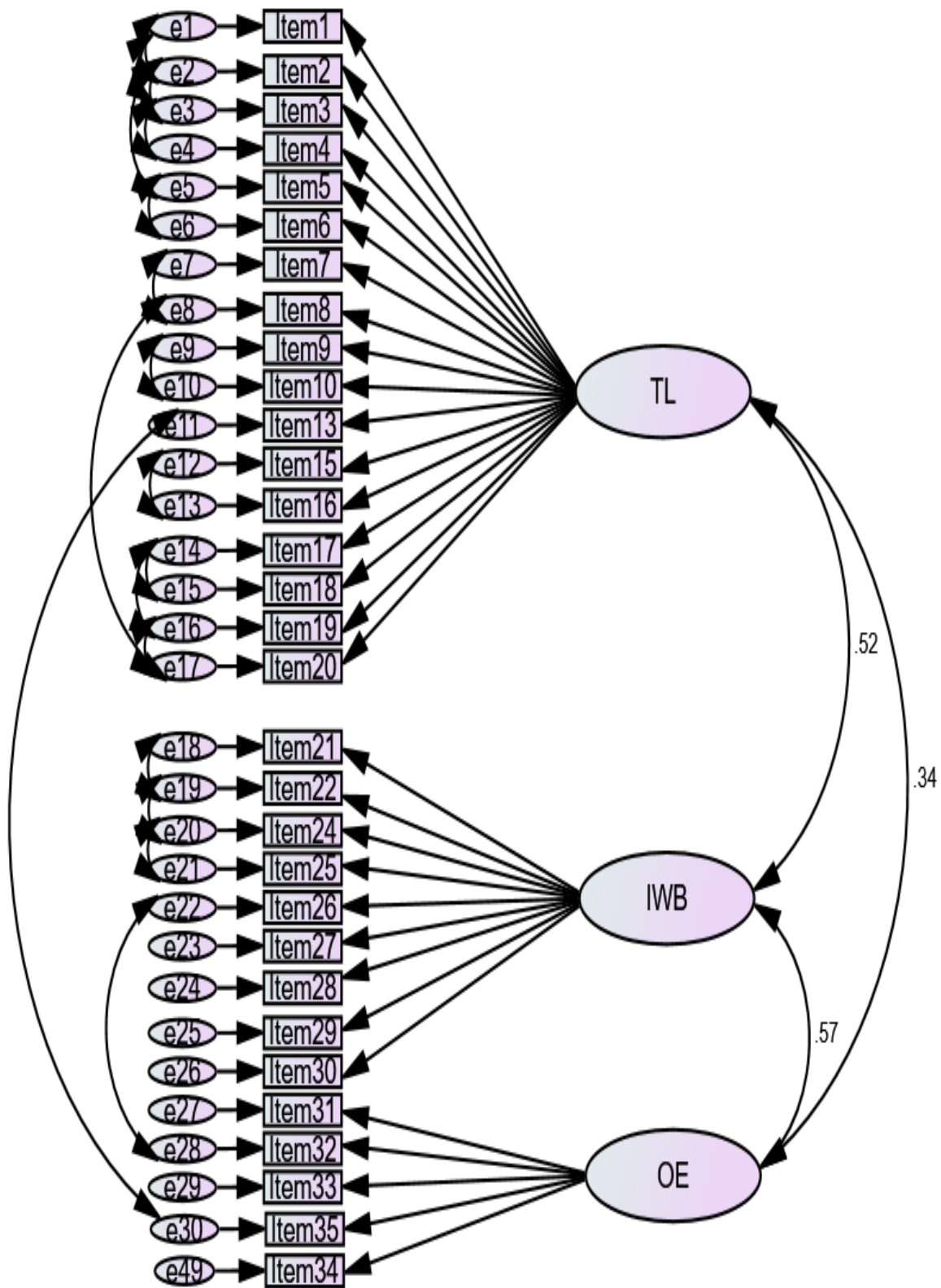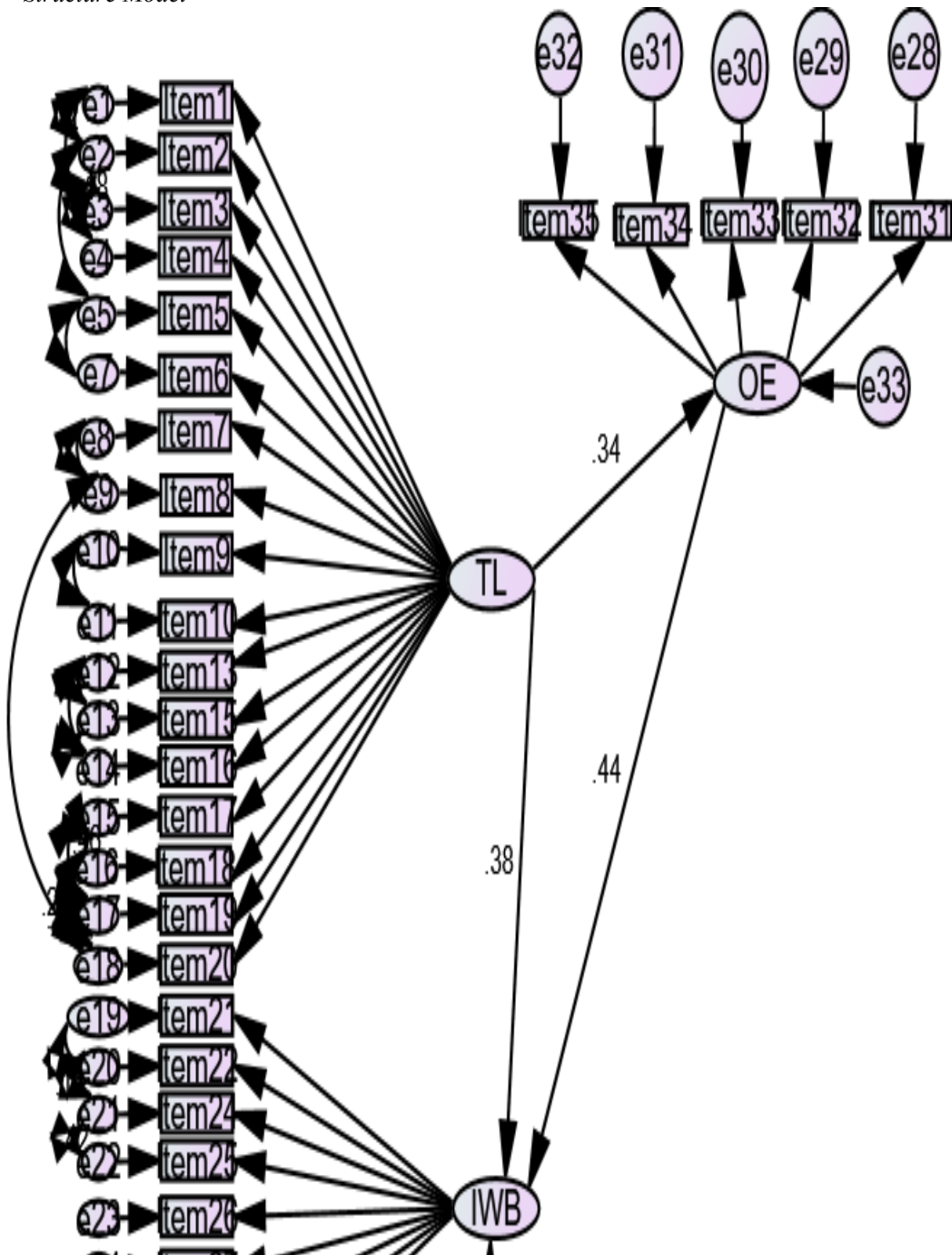
Figure 2

Measurement Model

Figure 3
Structure Model

Moderated Mediation Analysis

Gender was used as a moderator to examine the indirect effect of IWB on IWB. Table 5 shows that the indirect effects of TL on IWB through OE were significant for both female teachers (B = .0632, SE = .0202, 95% CI = .0286 to .1074) and male teachers (B = .0669, SE = .0162, 95% CI = .0317 to .0950). This result reveals that the indirect effect of TL through OE varies for female and male teachers. Hence, it is imperative to check whether the change is significant or not. In order to realize this, an index of moderated mediation test was conducted. The same Table illustrates that index of moderated mediation is not statistically significant since the value zero fell between the lower and upper limit of 95% confidence interval (Index= -.0037, CI= -.0505 to .0407). This implies that the indirect effect of dean's TL on teachers' IWB through OE is not moderated by teacher's gender. Hence based on these results, H3 was rejected.

Table 5

Moderated Mediation Results for TL via OE across Gender

Gender	B	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Female	.0632	.0202	.0286	.1074
Male	.0669	.0162	.0317	.0950
Index of Moderated Mediation				
Moderator	Index	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Gender	-.0037	.0234	-.0505	.0407

Discussion

The current study examined the influence of TL, OE and Gender on IWB. The results demonstrated the path coefficients between TL and OE, between TL and IWB and between OE and IWB were positive and significant. These findings are consistent with previous studies (Afsar, et al., 2019; Jung, Chow & Wu, 2003; Raja & Johns, 2010; Sidaoui, 2007; Zainab, Akbar & Siddiqui, 2022). This suggests that college deans who practice TL behaviors can encourage learning, inspire, build trust, respect and support teachers. This in turn promotes teachers IWB to generate new ways of teaching and solving societal problems. Such an outcome is in line with the results of some previous research (Li, Zhao, & Begley, 2015; Shin and Zhou, 2003).

When the mediating effect of OE was examined in the relationship between TL and IWB, the results suggest that OE mediates the effect of deans' TL on teachers' IWB. This result is consistent with previous studies (Groves, 2020; Zainab, Akbar & Siddiqui, 2022) that indicate the impact of TL on OE. In addition, studies Yesil and Sozbilir (2013) illustrate that OE influences IWB. The transitivity of TL impact on OE, and OE in turn influencing IWB implies that OE mediates the link between deans' TL and teachers' IWB. Thus, it may be concluded that deans TL has an indirect effect on teachers' IWB. This entails that OE is not only an outcome of TL but also it is the foundation for TL to have an effect on IWB. Hence, hypothesis 1 was supported.

It appears that by demonstrating TL behaviors, deans can encourage teachers to be open minded, curious for new perspectives, challenge the existing practices that help them generate new ideas to improve educational practices in particular and societal problems at large. This result is in line with the claim that TL encourages innovative behavior (Messmann & Mulder, 2011) and teachers who are high on OE possess broader range and depth of experience, and more of an appreciation of the merits of new ways of doing things and the potential for improving and changing the status quo (George & Zhou, 2001).

The results also illustrated that gender did not moderate the indirect effect of TL on IWB through OE. This result is consistent with the findings of previous researches (Steyn & de Bruin, 2020; Kushnirovich & Heilbronn, 2013; Ponsa, Ramosa & Ramos, 2016) that reveal the existence of relationships between IWB and its antecedents do not differ as a function of gender. Supporting this, Nahlinder, Tillmar and Wigren(2015) found no significant difference in innovativeness between males and females. A study in Israel confirmed that gender has no significant influence on teachers' innovativeness. It is rather found that culture of the society had unique effect on individuals'' innovative behaviors (Kushnirovich and Heilbrunn, 2013). This implies that being male or female did not affect teachers' innovativeness. However, some of the previous studies (e.g., Bozeman & Gaughan, 2007; Panagiotis, 2016) found that males are more innovative than females. The reason behind might be due to the male labeling of innovations, less visibility of females as innovators, and the selection of male dominated institutions for studies (Newnham, 2016).

Conclusion and Implications

IWB has a potential positive effect on teachers' performance (Messmann & Mulder, 2011). In this study, it was found out that deans' TL has positive effect on teachers' OE. The results also revealed that OE affects teachers' IWB. This suggests that OE has a significant mediation role in the relationship that exist between deans' TL and teacher's IWB. Therefore, it can also be inferred that deans' TL and teachers' OE have the potential to make teachers more innovative. Based on this moderated mediation, it can be concluded that the effect of OE on IWB is not conditional as a function of teachers' gender.

This study has practical implications. For university presidents and human resource departments, the findings give an empirically supported knowledge on how to promote teachers' IWB and explain the contribution of TL and OE in organizational innovations. The practical implication of the findings is that deans' TL promotes IWB by encouraging teachers to challenge practices differently, by enhancing shared vision, and by building a supportive innovation climate. This study provides the basis for university presidents and college deans to encourage teachers make difference in universities by innovating ideas to solve educational problems in higher education institutions. Gender does not make any difference in teachers' innovativeness as far as dean's leadership is supportive to innovation and teachers have openness to experience personality. Hence, the deans should create conducive environment to innovation and develop teachers'

openness through training or other mechanisms. Irrespective of their gender categories they can engage themselves in IWB.

In addition, teachers' innovative behavior is not enhanced by a single factor. As with other human behavior, it is influenced by several factors. Therefore, college deans should combine different methods to boost teachers' IWB. These methods should focus on the combination of organizational and individual factors. The model developed in this study offers significant insights into the relationship between TL and IWB at a single regional state. Future research needs to study this model at national level.

Limitations and Future Directions

There are limitations in the current study. First, the study used a cross-sectional research design whereby the data were collected at the same time and from a single source. Although a cross sectional data enable the generalizability of the findings, it prevented close investigation of several facets of the relationships in this study. The development of time series data and investigating the relationship between TL and IWB in a longitudinal research design would provide more insight into probable causation. Second, the sample is limited to universities located in a single National Regional State. It is also limited to public universities excluding private universities found in Ethiopia. This means that the results may not be generalized to all universities in the country. The sample selection may also limit the generalization of results to the overall population. Future studies should expand the range of sampling, such as inclusion of other regional universities in the country.

Third, this study used gender as the only moderator in the indirect effect of TL on IWB. This shows that the limited form of moderator included in this study may not enable to fully reflect the views of teachers in the universities. Future studies should add other demographic variables like education level, experience and field of specialization, etc. that may explain the current results better. Fourth, the results are based merely on teachers' responses. It is plausible that other sources of data, like college deans or students, might shed a diverse sight on their IWB. Fifth, the limited number of independent variables used in this research do not fully represent the perspectives of Ethiopian teachers towards IWB. This research may not be able to fully explain the factors that influence the perspective of teachers towards IWB. The limited independent variables may affect the final result of this research. Hence, future studies should consider other variables that make the study more comprehensive.

Lastly, Hayes PROCESS Macro Model 14 was employed to examine the role of gender in the indirect effect of TL on IWB through OE (Hayes, 2022). The model tests the moderated mediation effect of gender taking a single path from OE to IWB. The moderated mediation effect of gender might be different if gender was examined in the three paths simultaneously. Hence, future studies should use Hayes PROCESS Macro Model 59 to extend the present study's results on gender by examining OE as a potential mediator between TL and IWB.

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Early Grade Reading: The Experience of Donaberber Full Cycle Primary School in Providing Opportunities to Learn

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Donaberber Full Cycle Primary School in providing students foundational opportunities enabling them to read in their early grade (grade 1). All teachers (n= 7) assigned to teach grade one students, 2 school principals, and randomly selected 56 (out of 273) first-grade students participated in the study. Data were collected through observation, interviews, document analysis, and focus group discussion. Weft-QDA software was used to conduct a qualitative analysis of the information gathered from observation, interviews, and focus group discussions in order to identify overarching themes. Data from document analysis were analysed quantitatively. The study found that spending available resources differently, the school employed effective and efficient utilization of OTL. Specifically, the investigation revealed that there was an optimal use of instructional time, meaning that students were given maximum instructional time for reading, and reading was the instructional priority for the first three months of the school year, and the school applied an innovative pedagogy. The way the school provided students with foundational opportunities to read early within a few months is a good experience from which others could learn.

Introduction

Since the introduction of the Ethiopian 1994 education and training policy, various reforms that aimed at improving the access and quality of education have been initiated. These reforms have resulted in an increase in access to education, with primary school enrolment rates increasing from 5.7 million to 20 million over the past two decades (MoE, 2021). Although great progress has been made in terms of access to education for all citizens, the quality of education remains a critical challenge. So far, five National Learning Assessments (NLAs) have been conducted at grades 4 and 8 in Ethiopia. The main objectives of all these assessments were to determine the various levels of student performance in four key academic subject areas, one being basic reading. All NLAs showed that the overall achievement scores at national level were below the expected minimum standards set by the Ministry of Education.

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In 2016, another investigation was conducted on Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) in light of the importance of reading and writing skills development in early grades (USAID, 2010; USAID, 2016; USAID, 2018). The 2016 EGRA results were 60.1%, but then declined to 53.3% in 2018, indicating that the target was not met and scores were deteriorating over time.

The NLAs and EGRA national surveys indicate that poor quality early literacy performance is a concern in primary schools. Additionally, it is not uncommon to hear complaints from parents about the poor reading and writing skills of their children in early grades.

Despite national assessment reports and public discontent, I have observed reports from schools of a reversal in which a large proportion of children remained unreadable in their early years of primary education. According to reports, in some schools, first graders became able to read and write in their mother tongue within a few months of Grade 1 registration.

Donaberber Full Cycle Primary School in Bahir Dar city administration was one of the schools that participated in a symposium which claimed success in early grade reading. As a result, I was very excited to systematically study how the school became effective in children's early grade reading as reported.

To assess whether or not students had acquired the reading and writing skills as reported, we randomly selected 35 students from seven sections and tested them on foundational reading and writing skills. The assessments included letter identification, word naming fluency, and reading comprehension in Amharic. The result of the preliminary assessment was impressive because we found out no nonreaders. We focused on this school, therefore, to explore its experiences in providing students the opportunities for reading early within a few months of registration.

To that end, the study was organized under the following question: How did the school provide Grade 1 students foundational opportunities to read early within a few months of registration?

Significance

The ability to read and understand a text is the most important skill a child should learn in early grades. Learning to read early and at a sufficient rate is critical for children's overall academic success. Based on this importance, the findings from this study could be used by the school to strengthen and further refine its current experiences. The findings might also be used by the Bahir Dar City Education Department to scale up the experience of the school to other schools in the city.

Scope of the study

The present study explored the experiences of Donaberber Full Cycle Primary School in providing students the foundational opportunities that enhance children's early grade reading ability in Amharic language. Based on the OTL pyramid developed by Moore, DeStefano, and Adelman (2012), I made the focus of this study to be on the foundational OTL factors. Issues that

dealt with more complex assessments to estimate children's level of proficiency in reading were not among the focus of the present investigation.

Conceptual Framework

Early Grade Reading

Learning to read is critical to how well students perform in other academic subjects and it sets the foundation for all other learning. According to Roskos, Strickland, Hasse, and Malik (2009), the ability to read and understand a text is the most fundamental skill a child should learn and acquiring these skills begins early and is supported by high quality early reading programs.

The report from USAID (2018) indicates that if children do not learn to read early, they are more likely to have a harder time staying in school and are likely to eventually drop out, or they will fall behind their peers in terms of academic achievement. According to Lyons and Weiser (2009), having good reading skills provides students with a lot of benefits in terms of their academic success, social life, and emotional well-being. However, due to various reasons, not all children learn to read well in the early years. Some children start to have trouble with basic reading skills.

The UNESCO (2020) too indicated that early grade reading is important in order to provide basic skills that will help students learn curriculum in later years. If students do not learn to read well in their first years of school, they will have a harder time learning and doing well in later years. According to the USAID (2010) report, in many countries students enrolled for four or more years are unable to read and understand simple texts.

Opportunity to Learn

Lamain (2018) argues that, in studies published before 1980, the definition of OTL was quite narrow, with a focus on the similarities between the content that has been taught and the test content. Over the next two decades, broader definitions were proposed, including not only the content that is taught, but the way it is taught and by whom it is taught (Elliott, 1998). Even learner variables, like if a student has a computer at home, are sometimes taken into account. Stevens (1993) developed a framework for OTL which included four OTL components. The four elements in this framework are content coverage, content exposure, content emphasis, and quality of instructional delivery. Wang (1998) considered Steven's four OTL factors in his study on the relationship between these variables and students learning and reported that the OTL variables explained a large proportion of the variation in students learning. In his investigation, OTL variables were found to be significantly influenced students' achievement in a multi-level study. Similarly, Benavot and Amadio (2004) reported that pupil achievement increases when students are given greater opportunities to learn.

There are many different conceptions of "OTL," which can lead to confusion about its definition. Recently, Moore, DeStefano, and Adelman (2012) illustrated an OTL pyramid indicating the level of factors as foundational (lowest level) and complex interventions (higher

level). They added, the lowest level factors have a huge impact on learning outcomes by spending available resources differently.

The concept of OTL embodies two dimensions: the amount and quality of exposure. As literature shows, the educational value of foundational opportunity to learn depends on how teachers and students use the time available during the day, how much time is engaged in academic activities, and the quality of those activities. Moore, DeStefano, and Adelman (2012) developed an opportunity to learn index consisting of 12 factors intended to describe and measure the basic elements required for initial learning to occur. Some of these factors are related to the use of instructional time as an input and others are related to the quality of pedagogy. The OTL definition used in this study is based on Moore, DeStefano, and Adelman's work.

Methods

Research Design

This study used a case study research design to explore the experience of Donaberber Full Cycle Primary school on how the school provided grade 1 students foundational opportunities to read early within a few months of registration. Case study, according to Yin (2006), is an approach to explore a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources. Yin stipulates that case study explores phenomena with a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood. The present study used various data collection methods in order to have an in depth understanding of how the school became successful in children's early grade reading.

Sampling

The participants of this study were seven teachers, two school principals, and 56 first-grade students from all the seven sections in Donaberber full cycle primary school. Teachers teaching first graders and principals of the school were all involved in an interview and focus group discussions. Students were randomly selected from seven sections (8 students from each section) and were given a reading test (35 students for the preliminary study) and interviewed (21students for the main study).

Data Gathering Tools and Procedures

To address the purpose of the study, data were gathered through observation, interviews, document analysis, and focus group discussion. The interviewees were teachers teaching in grade one, the school principal, and first grade students. There were also observations and focused group discussions. Minutes, attendance sheets, and documents related with student assessment were also analyzed.

First, students' preliminary reading skills were assessed using a reading test. Then the school principals have been interviewed to obtain information about teachers, students, how the

school carries out activities related to early grade reading, how the school handles challenges in the process. For this purpose, interview guidelines were prepared and used. I also had a focus group discussion and observations with those teachers teaching in grade one focused on the same agenda. Students were also interviewed with the aim of getting a general idea about the support they get from their parents, how they support each other, common classroom practices, and the supports from their teachers to become better readers and writers. Document analysis was carried out in conjunction with data from observation, interviews, and focus group discussion.

Data Analysis Techniques

Depending on the nature of the data, qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques were used. For data analysis, first twelve discrete codes were identified. Then three broad categories or themes were established using Weft-QDA software. The school's OTL index was determined quantitatively in percentages. Data from interviews, focus group discussions, and observations were analyzed qualitatively.

Results

Quantitative Data

To determine the school's OTL index, the school's academic calendar, teacher attendance sheets, student attendance sheets, and meeting minutes were analyzed. In addition, classroom observation was carried out. It was estimated by calculating the difference in the percentage of days the school was open over all possible days; percentage of average teacher attendance rate, percentage of average student attendance rate, percentage of school days available for instruction, and percentage of classroom time that children spend on tasks.

The school was actually open from the beginning of the school year and the end of the first semester; data was collected from school records, staff attendance records and photographs. The school was found to have opened on the official start date and closed for vacation on the last day of the first semester. A staff meeting was held at the end of the first semester and records were viewed in the principal's office showing that teachers' attendance records had been collected.

After collecting data from the attendance, it was found that the percentage of teacher attendance was high (96.59%). We also observed their presence in the classrooms on three randomly selected days, and found that all teachers were in their classrooms with their students on all three occasions. Similarly, data on school truancy for students was collected from the attendance and the percentage determined. The data was collected from schools' official attendance books, which indicated that the percentage of first grade students in the first semester of the school year, on average, attended the school nearly 96 percent of the time. Three observations were made, and nearly 95 percent of the students were in their classrooms on average.

To estimate the percentage of the school day available for instruction, the non-instructional components of the school day, such as recess, late start, early end, or experience interruptions in instructional time for a variety of reasons (e.g., the teacher or students may be out of class) were

investigated and data were collected on the loss of instructional time during the school day. According to estimates from the department head report, a day and a half was lost during school time from the first semester. The percentage of the school day available for instruction was therefore about 96% (Table 1). The data presented in Table 1 shows that the schools' profile in terms of OTL indicators was high.

Table 1

Potential OTL compared with Actual OTL

		OTL Indicators			
	Semester Official School Days	Teacher Attendance Rate	Student Attendance Rate	Time Available for Instruction	Time Spend "on task"
Potential OTL	88 days	88 days	88 days	352 hrs.	352 hrs.
Actual OTL	88 days	85 days	85.24 days	340 hrs.	318 hrs.
Percent	100	96.59	96.86	96.60	90.34

Qualitative Data

School principals, teachers and students were asked to report on how the school meets its responsibilities in relation to children's early reading. Table 2 shows the codes and themes identified from the interviews and focus group discussion (FGD). In general, the use of classroom time to the maximum extent, the emphasis on reading in the lower grades, and the application of inclusive pedagogy were elucidated through interviews, focus groups, and observations.

Table 2

Codes and Themes Established from Interviews and FGD

Code (OTL)	Theme
• No late start, no early end • High teacher attendance rate • High student attendance rate • Optimal time available for instruction	Effective use of the school calendar
• School level reading assessment • Student textbook ratio • Academic competition forums • Class size • Early diagnosis	Emphasis on reading in lower grades
• Time on task • Continuous assessment • Cooperative instructional approach (small groups)	Application of inclusive pedagogy

Effective Use of School Calendar

Qualitative data (Table 2) shows that the schools' official calendar days were used very sensibly. There was no late start, nor was there early end. Alongside this, there was a high teacher attendance rate, a high student attendance rate, and optimal time available for teaching.

In terms of sensible use of the official school calendar days, the school management reported, for example, that they strictly adhere to the school calendar and do not lose any school days available for lessons due to a late start, early end or other reasons. Similarly, one of the focus group discussants informed that formal teaching and learning was started just on the first day of the school year. She said the following:

> We usually schedule and fix activities for students before they come back from vacation. School was also closed for vacation on the last day of the academic calendar. Both teachers and students have been working until the end of first semester.

Emphasis on Reading in Lower Grades

Qualitative data (Table 2) also shows that reading was given high importance in the lower grades of school. Commitments the school emphasized included school-level reading comprehension assessments, individual provision of textbooks to students, forums for reading competitions, and minimizing class size. In this regard, principals and teachers reported that they supported each other by emphasizing reading and writing for the first graders in the first three months of the school year and that these internal support systems were in place. In addition, students' literacy skills were assessed at school level, in addition to continuous classroom assessment conducted by teachers. Regarding this practice, the principal reported that the school placed the instructional focus on literacy activities in the first three months of the school year to get first grade students engage reading and writing, and this focus was guided by a separate one intervention plan.

Teachers also said they spent most of their time in reading and writing classes during the first three months. One of the discussants said:

> We got a big assignment from the school which was to get all the students literate within three months from the date of enrollment. The aim was to ensure that student performance was not below average. The direction of how we tackled this great task was clear and shared from the start. In the first months our focus was on teaching reading and writing, and then we were successful.

Teachers add on saying:

> We plan performance indicators and acceptable performance levels together. There is cross-class supervision among the first class teachers. We meet weekly and discuss problems for which there are immediate solutions. This usually happened on Friday after class. Solutions were passed on and every weekend was used to agree on these solutions. There was a teacher ranking based on our proficiency level. Fortunately, we all did best in the first semester. We believe this achievement

was the result of teamwork, close monitoring and dedication. We would like to thank our school management for recognizing our efforts.

The methods of assessment used in school vary, but a common method is continuous assessment, usually conducted by the class teacher. Academic competition forums were also held (students representing their departments will compete before any first grade students). The third and more systematic assessment was carried out centrally at the school. The pupils of the first class were tested on their reading and writing skills by means of a test prepared centrally at the school level.

Regarding the assessment techniques practiced, the school principal reported that teachers use various techniques to assess students' reading and writing levels. As he reported, teachers evaluate continuously throughout the teaching process and get through student academic competitions.

Application of Inclusive Pedagogy

Qualitative data (Table 2) shows that early diagnosis, time for assignments, continuous assessment, collaborative teaching approach (small groups) were the approaches used by the school to get students reading early. In this regard, the director felt that effective and efficient use of class time is a valuable asset for the school. He reported that classrooms are often observed to assess the extent to which teachers engage students in productive activities. The director also added that teachers have been found to use class time to engage students in productive classroom activities that engage students in reading and writing. Teachers don't waste time leaving children in the classroom with unproductive tasks.

To triangulate the data, we observed teachers and students in their classrooms and recorded the types of classroom activities and the types of materials used. Both students and teachers were observed at work most of the time. Non-instructional activities (discipline and student withdrawal) were very rare. From the focus group discussion, we have also learned that they were working courageously, without being pushed by some other external force. As reported in the FGD, extra support for grade one students on reading and writing (usually on the weekends) was commonplace in the school.

Both principals and teachers reported that the school's performance in diagnosing learning needs was thorough and organized. They said that the students' background information is well documented and that the need for assistance is diagnosed early through a continuous assessment process. Early interventions were then put into practice at school. Here is teachers' account of how they organize information about their students from the very beginning.

> We were assigned by our department to teach the first grade. First, we worked to have basic data about our students' backgrounds. We all interviewed their parents when they came to our school. We have recorded information and then make it part of the child's profile reference document. Continuous evaluation takes place at our school on a daily basis. We use formats to capture how children participate

in their small groups, academic difficulties and strengths, emotions, and so on. Since the class size is small, it is not that difficult to follow the behavioral development of the children in the first grade.

Referring to how teachers identify students and provide academic support, another FGD discussant said that they assess students' level of reading and other aspects of behavior to classify them into three categories: struggling readers, intermediate readers, and fast readers. This helped them develop customized plans and implement remedial actions specifically for each student. As he said, this allowed them to know each student's strengths and weaknesses and how to approach each individually, based on shared activities in small groups. As a teaching method, student groups are formed and used in the classroom according to the concept of mixed ability groups.

The principal described what the early intervention program at the school looks like. Three pedagogical approaches, namely, supporting them through small groups, grouping them with students from their villages, and providing individual tutoring were employed to helping struggling readers.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine Donaberber Full Cycle Primary School's experiences in providing students with essential opportunities that enable them to read in their early grades. Utilization of classroom time to the greatest possible extent (high OTL), emphasis on reading in the lower grades, and application of inclusive pedagogy were explored through document analysis, interviews, focus group discussions, and observation.

Firstly, this study has shown that the school's official calendar days were used very wisely and to the maximum. There was also no late start and no early end to the school calendar. In addition, a high attendance rate of the teachers, a high attendance rate of the students and an optimal use of the available time for the lessons were observed.

The school seems to understand the irreplaceable value of the time a child should devote to reading. In this context, Save the Children International (2016) found that children need ample opportunities to practice their literacy skills both inside and outside of school. Save the Children International (2016) widely demonstrated that reading volume, or the amount of time a child spends reading, is positively related to reading outcomes. Save the Children reiterated this important finding in a range of development contexts, from urban Indonesia to rural Ethiopia.

In contrast to this finding, however, a study by USAID (2010) in Woliso, Ethiopia, found that students' reading performance was low. The low performance was attributed to the reason that the schools did not use the teaching time available to them. According to the report, teacher and student absences combined reduce the time available for instruction by up to 43 percent. Also, the time the school was open and teachers and students were present was further reduced by the fact that the students were not busy studying. Moore, DeStefano, and Adelman (2012) have a similar conclusion that students almost always receive less than the prescribed number of hours of

instruction. In the present study, however, the school used an optimal time for teaching. The school was strict about the use of the school calendar. Almost no school days available for instruction were lost due to late start, early end or other reasons. The time available for the lesson and the time devoted to the task were very high. It appears partly because of this that the school achieved its goal in raising students' reading performance. Benavot and Amadio (2004) find that student achievement increases when students are given more opportunities to learn, particularly when engaged study time is maximized.

The high OTL in the school could be the result of the support for the teaching staff, the teachers' supervision, and the regular meetings between teachers, parents, the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and the Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSU). The agreements signed between teachers and student parents helped ensure that both parties were held accountable for student attendance and student learning. It is believed that all of these strategies worked together to support the school's success.

Second, it was observed in this study that reading was emphasized in the lower grades in school. Minimized class size, individual provision of textbooks and other age-appropriate reading materials to students, school-level reading assessment, and reading competition forums were among the commitments the school emphasized.

The evidence for the benefits of small class size is inconclusive. However, Haimson (2000) reported that the experience of class size reduction observed by principals and teachers was overwhelmingly positive. The quality and quantity of teaching has improved fundamentally because smaller classes allowed teachers to give more individual attention to their students and have used small group teaching more effectively. He claims smaller classes have allowed teachers to assess and follow up on students more frequently. Haimson (2000) argues that children need a variety of age- and context-appropriate reading materials that stimulate their imagination and motivation to read and build on their existing language skills, although improving access to quality children's reading books globally is a challenge.

In contrast to the findings of the present study, in addition to the loss of time on task that is evident in schools and classrooms, USAID (2010) reported that reading instruction is virtually non-existent in Bacho, Dendi, and Goro schools. The vast majority of classroom activities were not classified as instruction in reading, nor did they involve students reading text.

In the present study, we observed that the school placed emphasis on literacy activities in the first three months of the school year to get first-grade students up to speed on reading and writing. This focus was guided by a separate intervention plan. Making literacy a focus of instruction in the early grades requires not only the commitment and creativity of teachers, but also the attention and appropriate support of educators and the community at different levels. In order to minimize class size and use textbooks one-to-one, the decision and support of educational leaders is paramount.

Third, the present study has shown that early identification of learning needs, maximum time for a task, practice of continuous assessment, and use of a collaborative teaching approach (small groups) were the approaches used by the school to get students reading early bring to.

Literature portrays that early screening can lead to timely detection of learning difficulties that may indicate risk for learning. Early screening can result in children receiving additional help sooner and prevent them from falling behind.

However, USAID (2010) reported poor pedagogical practices observed in the schools. According to the report, there seemed to be no structured approach to teaching reading in schools. This study, however, indicates the existence of the practice of innovative pedagogy in the school. The school believes that literacy development requires high levels of interaction between students. To maximize class time, teachers grouped the children into small teams and helped them engage in group and cross-group exercises. This would give teachers more time to focus on each student. Small groups have played an important role in providing adequate instruction time. The school has mechanisms in place to coordinate student collaboration outside of the classroom and inside the school and classroom.

Conclusion and Implications

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that Donaberber Full Cycle Primary School gave the children basic opportunities to read early within a few months of admission. Ways include using the school calendar effectively, emphasizing reading in the early grades, and implementing an inclusive pedagogy.

The results of this study tell us about future practice in teaching reading in early grades that one of the best experiences of the school in enabling students read in their early enrollment lies on the high OTL. The benefits of maximizing learning opportunities could be significant and would help ensure student engagement and literacy in the first grades as teachers would have ample time to teach children and children would have ample opportunities to practice their reading and writing skills both inside and outside of school.

The study has also shown that early reading in the lower grades is the school's top priority. The school had a separate plan for early reading, class sizes were deliberately minimized, experienced and energetic teachers were used to teach, and school-level reading competitions and EGRA were held. All of these actions enabled the school to take appropriate action to adapt teaching materials and practices. It also enabled the school to ensure teacher and community commitment to achieve its goal.

The results also suggest that teachers teaching first graders use innovative pedagogies. They begin their work by examining students based on their reading ability. Screening can lead to timely detection of learning difficulties that might signal risk for learning. Early screening can result in children receiving additional help sooner and prevent them from falling behind.

Limitations of the Study

The present study has two important limitations. First, the focus of this study is only on foundational reading skills in the Amharic language. It was not intended to examine all the reading skills students need to develop. Second, though teacher development practices are key factors in equipping teachers with the skills necessary to teach reading effectively, this dimension was not

considered in this study. Therefore, these could be considered as topics that could potentially attract the attention of future researchers.

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