



Teacher Educators' Professional Competencies: the Unrecognized Profession in Ethiopia

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Abstract

Inadequate transfer of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors from the context of teacher education to the school environment, teaching children is a big concern in this 21st century. To realize this, teacher competence is the most respected part of educational assets. A person to be considered as a member of profession of teaching student teachers has to possess essential qualities and professional competence. Teachers should have personal, social, professional competences and positive attitude towards teaching profession. The present article aims at evaluating and synthesizing teacher educators' professional competencies from various sources. Systematic review method is employed to identify the uncertainty of teacher educators, policy and practice gaps, in Ethiopia. The entire attempt is to relate the synthesis to the Ethiopian context; while reflecting the drawbacks of the Ethiopian teacher education system. Fifty-one articles were identified using web searching terms, and qualitative systematic review was employed. Available literature of various years (from year 1959 to 2019) were identified, selected, read, reviewed, analyzed, synthesized, interpreted, discussed and concluded. The available literatures those are focusing on teacher educators were selected. The findings of the reviews show that teacher educators professional competence has been supported by policy and give due attention in the other part of the world, unlike Ethiopia. No one should be a teacher educator without high quality professional competences; and this is achieved when teacher education is independently organized within its own structural set up, to work towards its vision, goals and mission. To create teachers' professional competences, there must be high level professionally competent teacher educators in a well-organized teacher education system. High level of teacher educators' competence realizes greater achievement in education; whereas, low level of teachers' competence resulted in poorer education, like we are facing today. Ethiopia really needs teacher education system that meets the demands of Ethiopian people in this 21st century.

1 Introduction

The question of what kind of competences teacher educator need to possess, to enhance the quality of education, should be a question of what kind of teacher education programs we have. Teacher educators are expected to be competent enough in constructing knowledge, skills and positive attitude towards their student teachers, children, their profession, nature, diversities and societal devel-

opments in general. They are also expected to create positive physical and social environments of the schools, which are vital for learner's well-being and holistic development. In return, their students' teachers need to be competent enough in creating high level mental ability of their students; be competent in identifying, assessing and supporting divers needs, and create dynamic and fruitful learning environment. Quality education

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and training of students' teachers can bring tremendous change on children. Teachers play a central role in providing better opportunities to learn to interact, communicate, develop friendship, work together, and assist one another, considering their strengths, difficulties, differences and special needs. Teachers' influence is essential for children's social skills, emotional, cognitive, language, academic, behavioral and psychomotor developments. To play such a very significant role in the lives of students, they must be a graduate of quality teacher education programs; a program that is well organized and led by competent teacher educators. Teacher educators should be the best models for their student teachers, so that the student's teachers in their turn become models in their communication of academic content and in their response to the constantly changing social and emotional needs of all children with divers' needs and potentials. This tells us that the most important and expensive resource in any school, classroom and community are teachers.

Educating student teachers is not simply lecturing like preaching or talking to them; rather, talking with the candidates that help them to learn content knowledge, skills, personality and the didactics; for student teachers to repeat similar things to their young learners. These help teachers to understand learners' needs and learning potential. These in turn help teachers to predict what the learners can do alone and perform with the support of adults (Vygotsky, 1978). It also helps to develop beliefs and appropriate expectations of their students. Teachers' beliefs and expectations of their students' potential can also affect their students' actual performance and directions in their development and career. Competencies of teachers can also create positive and welcoming academic environments for all learners. This helps to create citizens with good personalities and intrinsic motivation that may facilitate better learning. Hence, creating well organized teacher education and training program with highly competent teacher educators can yield teachers who have all rounded competencies.

Contrary to this, teachers' professional incompetence may demonstrate negative feelings, by rejecting, discouraging, discomforting, distracting, confusing, silence and indifference to the students'

needs, unique potential, activity and experiences (Rye, 1998). Teachers with professional incompetence may not be able to analyze their relationship with their students, understand them and understand the learning environment. They may not keep a close watch on problems; potential problems, special needs, and may not be able to apply appropriate knowledge and skill to meet the needs of all children in their classroom. Teachers with professional incompetence may demonstrate negative feelings and undesirable communicative interactions with their pupils and may fail to enhance quality education; the education that help students to change their own life and the life of the nation. From the above paragraphs we can understand that there may be two kinds of teachers in schools: those who transform education on the right track and those who go astray.

There is no policy that helps to exclude the incompetent teachers who are at risk for the development of the nation. With well-organized teacher education programs and the best teacher educators, we must build teachers who are inspirational figures, motivators, architects, dynamists, and communicators to change, discover, and advance the potential of students to respond to the problems of present-day Ethiopian society. Therefore, the quality of education of student teachers depends on the quality of teacher educators, who are required to have the qualifications and competencies of experts in their fields. Establishing such independent teacher education institutes and producing high quality professionally competent teacher educators, requires national policy for appropriate practices.

Having the above challenges in mind, the purpose of this article is to review teacher educators' professional competences from various research findings around the world; synthesize them in relation to the Ethiopian context, while reflecting the drawbacks of the Ethiopian teacher education system. Then, the paper includes teachers' professional competency, methodological competences and the act of teaching motivational competences, material utilization competences, instructional competences, assessment competences, the practical knowledge, reflection and conclusion.

The main objective of the present desk review arti-

cle is to discuss teachers' professional competences based on the following specific basic research questions:

1. What are the major professional competences in teacher education around the world?
2. Why are professionally competent teacher educators are important in the development of teacher education?

2 Methods of the Reviews

This article employs a systematic review methodology. A systematic review is a comprehensive and structured research approach designed to identify, select, critically evaluate, and synthesize all available studies relevant to a specific research question or thematic area. Unlike traditional narrative reviews, systematic reviews follow clearly defined and replicable procedures, ensuring methodological rigor and transparency (Jill *et al.*, 2011).

Systematic reviews are particularly valuable for consolidating research findings and translating knowledge into practice. They help identify conceptual gaps, policy shortcomings, and inconsistencies in professional practice—especially in areas where uncertainty persists. In the present study, the systematic review approach is used to explore ambiguities surrounding teacher educators' professional roles and competencies, particularly within the Ethiopian context.

According to Mark and Helen (2006), systematic reviews provide evidence-based insights that inform policy decisions, guide professional practice, and support institutional development. This approach is especially appropriate in contexts where professional standards are unclear or underdeveloped. In Ethiopia, teacher educator roles remain insufficiently defined, and there is limited policy direction concerning qualifications, responsibilities, and professional identity. Consequently, the question of who should educate teachers and what competencies they should possess remains inadequately addressed (Mark and Helen, 2006). A systematic review offers a structured framework for analyzing such uncertainties.

Methodologically, systematic reviews operate within a scientific and qualitative framework, of-

ten grounded in an interpretive paradigm. This paradigm allows for comprehensive analysis of complex educational phenomena while maintaining objectivity, consistency, and procedural transparency (Jill *et al.*, 2011). The process involves explicit criteria for identifying sources, evaluating their relevance, synthesizing findings, and drawing conclusions.

The primary purpose of this review is to provide a broad yet structured analysis of teacher educators' professional competencies and the institutional systems that support them. The review process included data extraction, evaluation, synthesis, and interpretation. The initial step involved identifying key search terms derived from the research objectives, including "teacher educator" and "teachers' professional competence." Related and synonymous terms, as well as broader and narrower conceptual categories, were also incorporated to ensure comprehensive database coverage.

Although research specifically focused on teacher educators remains limited, the factors influencing their professional development are multifaceted and extensive. Given the scope constraints of this article, the review concentrates on foundational theoretical perspectives and core competency domains rather than attempting to exhaust all related variables.

A total of fifty-one scholarly sources representing diverse cultural and academic contexts were identified and analyzed. The inclusion criteria prioritized studies that directly addressed teacher educators and student teacher preparation. The review process involved detailed reading, classification, comparative analysis, thematic synthesis, and contextual interpretation—particularly in relation to Ethiopian teacher education.

While efforts were made to prioritize recent publications, the limited availability of research specifically addressing teacher educators necessitated the inclusion of earlier foundational works. Accordingly, both primary and secondary sources published between 1959 and 2019 were considered eligible for inclusion. This extended timeframe reflects the scarcity of dedicated research in this specialized field.

The search strategy involved systematic exploration of electronic databases and reference lists using targeted keywords and combinations. The databases consulted included: Academia, ERIC, Google Scholar, Research4Life, Z-Library, PDF Drive

Studies were selected based on their relevance to teacher educators' professional competencies. Following identification, full texts were reviewed, analyzed, interpreted, and synthesized in relation to the guiding research questions. The findings are presented in the subsequent sections, where they are discussed in connection with international experiences and the Ethiopian educational context.

3 Results and Discussions

3.1 Teacher Educators' Professional Competencies

Following systematic screening and quality appraisal, fifty-one studies were selected for inclusion in this review examining teacher educators' professional competencies. As outlined in the methodology, this systematic review synthesizes major scholarly contributions addressing the nature, scope, and importance of teacher educator competence. Particular attention is given to explaining why professionally competent teacher educators are indispensable and how international experiences contrast with the Ethiopian context.

This section discusses several interrelated themes: the meaning of a teacher educator; characteristics of effective teaching (including teaching modes, instructional strategies, and classroom competencies); competencies related to instructional processes, inclusion of diversity, assessment, motivation, and practical knowledge; teacher attitudes; institutional arrangements for teacher education; and concluding reflections. Together, these themes underscore the central role of professionally competent teacher educators in strengthening teacher education systems.

3.2 What does teacher educator mean?

Research conceptualizes teaching competence as encompassing both tacit and explicit pedagogical content knowledge, cognitive and practical skills, and dispositional attributes such as motivation, beliefs, values, and emotional orientation (Rychen &

Salganik, 2003). Competence in teaching implies the ability to act professionally and appropriately in specific educational contexts (Koster & Dengerink, 2008), ensuring that tasks are carried out both effectively—achieving intended outcomes—and efficiently—optimizing time, effort, and resources.

In its simplest sense, a teacher educator is a teacher of teachers, typically operating within higher education institutions and responsible for preparing school teachers through pre-service and in-service programs. However, teacher educators constitute a distinct professional category that requires specialized knowledge, pedagogical expertise, and a deep understanding of teacher education as a discipline (Swennen & Klink, 2009).

In many countries, teacher educators are recruited from experienced primary and secondary school teachers who possess substantial classroom expertise. Their accumulated professional knowledge enriches teacher preparation programs. In contrast, such structured transition mechanisms are largely absent in Ethiopia.

Teacher educators carry multiple responsibilities, including teaching, supervising teaching practice, conducting research, providing institutional service, and engaging in lifelong professional development. Despite these complex roles, policy frameworks defining teacher educators' standards, competencies, and professional identity remain unclear in Ethiopia. Consequently, individuals possessing only subject matter expertise may claim the title of teacher educator without demonstrated pedagogical competence.

Professional competence in teacher education integrates three broad domains:

1. Pedagogical competence – the ability to understand learners, design and implement instruction, assess learning progress, and comprehend the dynamics of teaching and learning processes.
2. Personal competence – embodying ethical conduct, professional integrity, and serving as a role model.
3. Professional (subject) competence – mastery of content knowledge and the methodological foundations of that knowledge.

Teacher educators must demonstrate the capacity to perform essential professional tasks using discipline-based knowledge, technical skills, and problem-solving abilities. According to Kautto-Koivula (1996), teacher education programs should be structured to facilitate the development and maintenance of such professional competence. Willis and Dubin (1990) further emphasize that highly competent educators contribute directly to fulfilling institutional vision, mission, and strategic goals by identifying and addressing barriers that hinder teacher development and educational quality.

Effective teacher educators must therefore be competent in pedagogical content knowledge, classroom management, instructional design, educational technology, assessment strategies, and intervention methods. Equally critical is the possession of a positive professional attitude toward teaching.

When individuals lacking adequate professional preparation assume teacher educator roles, the quality of teacher education deteriorates. In Ethiopia, the absence of rigorous professional standards has allowed subject-matter specialists without pedagogical training to assume responsibility for preparing teachers—an issue less prevalent in many other educational systems.

3.3 Strength of Teacher Education Systems

Strong teacher education programs function like seeds planted in fertile soil, producing exponential growth in professional capacity. In contrast, weak systems resemble seeds sown in barren land, yielding minimal results (Fafunwa, 1991). The quality of national human capital development is closely tied to the quality of teacher educators and institutional organization (Banjo, 1960; Aderounmu & Ehiamentalor, 1985; Pillai, 2001).

Where teacher education systems are poorly structured, educational decline follows. Teacher educators' academic and professional competence influences not only classroom practice but also broader societal transformation. Teaching that merely repeats static content without responsiveness to social change fails to contribute meaningfully to national development.

Education serves as a gateway to emotional, intellectual, economic, and socio-cultural advance-

ment. Teachers hold the key to this gateway. While physical infrastructure and resources are necessary, they cannot substitute for competent teachers. As Fafunwa (1991) asserts, the quality of education largely depends on the professional competence of teachers.

Producing competent teachers requires:

- Clear philosophical direction
- Research-based frameworks
- Adequate institutional autonomy
- Sufficient time and resources

In Ethiopia, frequent structural changes and shifting reforms have often disrupted continuity in teacher education policy, limiting sustained improvement.

3.4 Consequences of Professional Incompetence

Professional incompetence among teacher educators has far-reaching implications. Teachers lacking pedagogical preparation may:

- Demonstrate ineffective communication
- Fail to recognize learner diversity
- Neglect special educational needs
- Show indifference toward student development
- Focus narrowly on content delivery without attention to holistic growth

Such deficiencies undermine not only individual student success but also national educational advancement.

Teacher educators must therefore cultivate teachers who are reflective, ethical, innovative, and responsive to contemporary societal challenges. Without professional standards, teacher education risks producing individuals who may lecture content but fail to nurture intellectual curiosity, emotional intelligence, ethical responsibility, and social cohesion.

3.5 Policy and Structural Concerns in Ethiopia

Historical reforms such as the Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) attempted to enhance teacher preparation, although implementation challenges limited sustainability. Subsequent structural shifts have often emphasized rapid production of teachers without sufficient attention to professional competence, pedagogical integration, or attitudinal development.

The absence of coherent policy defining teacher educator qualifications, institutional autonomy, and competency frameworks remains a central challenge. Without high-level professional competence among teacher educators, the development of capable school teachers becomes unlikely.

Ethiopia therefore requires a teacher education system capable of addressing 21st-century educational demands—one grounded in professional standards, institutional coherence, and evidence-based practice.

3.6 Effective Teaching

Effective teaching encompasses several interconnected components, including teaching modes, instructional methodologies, classroom competencies, and the overall instructional process. At its core, effective teaching reflects the educator's capacity to communicate clearly, present ideas logically, and transmit enthusiasm and commitment toward learning. A competent teacher educator does not merely deliver information but engages learners with passion, clarity, and pedagogical intentionality.

3.7 Teaching Modes

Gbamanja (1989) identifies four principal modes of teaching, each associated with distinct instructional purposes and curricular implications. These modes require professional proficiency and influence how knowledge, skills, and values are transmitted within classroom settings. The modes include:

Didactic Mode

The didactic mode focuses on the structured transmission of information. Its primary goal is to facilitate the acquisition of foundational knowledge and skills. In this approach, students engage with lectures, textbooks, structured explanations, and guided exercises. While often teacher-directed, the didactic mode can still require active learner participation when students practice and apply newly introduced concepts (Eastwood Paideia, 2004).

Heuristic Mode

The heuristic mode emphasizes inquiry, exploration, and discovery. Here, the teacher functions as a facilitator and resource person rather than a sole authority. Students are encouraged to investigate

problems, formulate questions, and construct understanding through active engagement. This approach promotes learning how to learn, fostering independence and critical thinking (Gbamanja, 1989).

Philetic Mode

The philetic mode seeks to stimulate learners' emotions, attitudes, and value judgments. Through discussion, conferences, reflective dialogue, and collaborative activities, students critically analyze ideas, resolve conflicts, make decisions, and apply knowledge to real-life contexts (Eastwood Paideia, 2004). This mode integrates affective learning with intellectual development.

Guristic Mode

In the guristic mode, the teacher draws upon experience, interpretation, and foresight. This approach encourages imagination, reflective thinking, and anticipation of future possibilities. The educator interprets meaning and contextualizes knowledge in ways that inspire students to envision broader applications (Gbamanja, 1989).

Together, these modes support varied instructional strategies such as lectures, demonstrations, dramatization, guided discussion, and questioning techniques. Effective teaching requires flexibility in selecting and integrating these modes according to instructional objectives and learner needs.

3.8 Teaching Methods

Teaching is not a spontaneous activity that any individual can undertake without preparation. Effective instruction demands systematic knowledge of teaching and learning processes. Simply speaking or writing on the board does not constitute quality teaching.

A professionally prepared teacher educator demonstrates the ability to:

- Adapt instructional strategies to diverse learning styles
- Analyze the instructional task
- Initiate lessons by stimulating learner interest
- Address diversity within the classroom
- Monitor learning progress
- Evaluate instructional effectiveness
- Modify teaching strategies when necessary

Gbamanja (1989) emphasizes that achievement should extend beyond memorization of facts. True achievement involves higher-order cognitive processes such as analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and creative thinking. Effective teachers design lessons that incorporate inquiry, experimentation, cooperative problem-solving, and meaningful application of knowledge.

Teachers are expected to articulate clear learning objectives, design interactive learning experiences, and guide individual learners toward mastery while promoting collaborative engagement. These responsibilities require both classroom management competence and instructional expertise.

Classroom Competencies

Classroom competence involves the ability to manage learning environments that support cognitive, emotional, and social development. Amalaha (1979) identifies several essential classroom competencies teachers must develop:

Competence in Facilitating Student Adjustment

Teachers should support students in adapting to academic tasks and social interactions within school environments. Creating a harmonious classroom atmosphere reduces frustration and enhances meaningful learning experiences.

Competence in Addressing Diverse Needs

Educators must recognize and respond to learners with diverse abilities and special educational needs. Inclusion requires understanding individual differences and ensuring equitable participation.

Competence in Understanding Cognitive and Social Challenges

Teachers should identify potential cognitive delays, social difficulties, or environmental influences affecting student performance. Early identification and intervention are critical in supporting development.

Competence in Aligning Curriculum with Developmental Levels

Instruction must correspond to students' mental and developmental readiness. Teachers should consider prior knowledge and ensure appropriate scaffolding to sustain intellectual growth.

Competence in Ensuring Curriculum Relevance

Teachers need to evaluate curriculum content critically and adapt it to meet the contextual needs of learners. Curriculum should remain responsive to contemporary debates and student realities.

3.9 Competence in Supporting Transitional Phases

Transitions—from home to school or between educational levels—can disrupt learners' emotional and intellectual stability. Teachers should provide guidance and emotional support during such periods.

Implications for Teacher Educators

Teacher educators must themselves demonstrate these classroom competencies in order to model effective practice for student teachers. Competence in teaching modes, methodological strategies, classroom management, and learner support is not optional; it is foundational to preparing effective teachers.

In summary, effective teaching requires:

- Pedagogical flexibility
- Mastery of instructional strategies
- Sensitivity to learner diversity
- Capacity to foster higher-order thinking
- Strong classroom management skills
- Emotional intelligence and responsiveness

Teacher educators who embody these competencies can cultivate student teachers capable of delivering quality education. Conversely, the absence of such competencies weakens the entire teacher preparation system. %

3.10 Instructional Process Competencies

Instructional process competence refers to the teacher educator's ability to plan, organize, implement, and evaluate teaching–learning activities

in a coherent and pedagogically sound manner. It extends beyond subject mastery and includes the professional capacity to transform content knowledge into meaningful learning experiences for diverse learners. Teaching competence has long been associated with observable classroom behaviors and measurable instructional outcomes (Medley, 1977). However, contemporary perspectives emphasize that effective instruction requires deeper integration of knowledge, skills, beliefs, and contextual awareness. Instructional competence therefore includes planning, delivery, classroom interaction, assessment, and reflection.

Planning Competence

Effective instruction begins with systematic planning. Teacher educators must demonstrate the ability to:

- Formulate clear and measurable learning objectives
- Structure content logically
- Select appropriate teaching strategies
- Design instructional materials
- Anticipate learner difficulties

Borich (1996) stresses that well-defined objectives serve as the foundation for instructional decision-making. Planning provides direction, ensures coherence, and aligns learning activities with intended outcomes.

Teacher educators must model lesson planning practices for student teachers, demonstrating how objectives, instructional activities, and assessments are interrelated. Without this modeling, student teachers may struggle to translate theory into classroom practice.

Pedagogical Content Knowledge

One of the most influential contributions to understanding instructional competence is Shulman's (1987) concept of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). PCK refers to the blending of subject matter expertise with knowledge of how to teach that subject effectively. It includes understanding common misconceptions, selecting illustrative examples, and adapting explanations to learners' cognitive levels.

Teacher educators must possess advanced PCK in order to guide student teachers in developing similar competencies. Simply knowing the subject is

insufficient; educators must know how to represent content in ways that make it accessible and meaningful.

Darling-Hammond (2006) further emphasizes that effective teacher preparation requires integrating subject knowledge with pedagogical training and practical experience. Instructional competence therefore involves bridging theory and practice in authentic contexts.

Implementation Competence

Implementation competence refers to the educator's ability to deliver instruction effectively. This includes:

- Clear communication
- Engaging presentation
- Questioning techniques
- Facilitation of discussion
- Classroom interaction management
- Use of instructional technologies

Competent teacher educators adjust instructional approaches based on learners' responses. They create interactive environments that encourage participation, critical inquiry, and collaborative learning.

Medley (1977) notes that effective teaching behaviors positively correlate with student learning outcomes. However, effective implementation is not mechanical; it requires responsiveness, adaptability, and contextual sensitivity.

Assessment Competence

Instructional competence also includes the ability to design and use appropriate assessment strategies. Assessment should not be limited to summative evaluation but should include formative approaches that provide continuous feedback.

Teacher educators must demonstrate competence in:

- Developing valid and reliable assessment tools
- Using diverse assessment methods
- Interpreting assessment results
- Providing constructive feedback
- Using results to improve instruction

Assessment literacy ensures that instructional decisions are evidence-based rather than intuitive. Darling-Hammond (2006) argues that assessment practices significantly influence teaching quality and learner achievement.

Reflective and Adaptive Competence

Instructional process competence requires ongoing reflection. Teachers must evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching and make necessary adjustments. Reflective practice enables educators to:

- Identify strengths and weaknesses
- Modify instructional strategies
- Respond to learner diversity
- Enhance professional growth

Professional reflection connects theory, practice, and experience. It ensures continuous improvement rather than static repetition of routines.

Contextual and Inclusive Considerations

Instructional competence must also account for contextual realities. Teacher educators should understand cultural diversity, socioeconomic differences, and institutional constraints affecting teaching and learning.

Inclusive instructional practices require:

- Sensitivity to learner diversity
- Accommodation of special educational needs
- Promotion of equitable participation
- Reduction of barriers to learning

Competence in the instructional process therefore integrates pedagogical knowledge, social awareness, ethical responsibility, and adaptability.

Implications for Ethiopian Teacher Education

In contexts where teacher educators lack pedagogical preparation, instructional processes often become content-dominated and lecture-centered. Without structured modeling of planning, implementation, assessment, and reflection, student teachers may replicate ineffective practices.

Strengthening instructional process competencies among teacher educators is therefore critical for improving teacher preparation programs. Professional standards, continuous development, and policy clarity are necessary to ensure that teacher educators embody and model best instructional practices.

3.11 Competency for inclusion of Diversity

Professional competence in teacher education extends beyond instructional delivery to include the ability to assess learning effectively and to motivate learners meaningfully. Assessment and motivation are inseparable from instructional processes, as both directly influence student engagement, achievement, and professional growth.

Assessment Competence

Assessment competence refers to the teacher educator's ability to design, implement, interpret, and utilize evaluation tools in ways that enhance learning. Assessment should function not merely as a mechanism for grading but as an integral component of the teaching–learning cycle.

Black and Wiliam (1998) emphasize that formative assessment plays a crucial role in improving student achievement when feedback is timely, constructive, and aligned with learning objectives. Assessment, therefore, should provide information that guides both instructors and learners in identifying progress and areas requiring improvement.

Brookhart (2003) further argues that effective assessment practices require clarity in learning expectations, transparency in grading criteria, and fairness in evaluation procedures. Teacher educators must model these practices for student teachers, demonstrating how assessment informs instruction rather than merely measuring outcomes.

Assessment competence includes the ability to:

- Develop valid and reliable instruments
- Use diverse assessment techniques (e.g., written tests, performance tasks, portfolios, observation, peer assessment)
- Provide diagnostic feedback
- Align assessment with instructional objectives
- Interpret results responsibly
- Adjust teaching strategies based on evidence

When teacher educators lack assessment literacy, evaluation often becomes mechanical, focusing solely on summative examinations. Such limited practices fail to capture higher-order thinking, professional skills, and reflective capacities.

In teacher education programs, assessment must evaluate not only theoretical understanding but also pedagogical practice, professional ethics, classroom management skills, and reflective abilities.

Motivational Competence

Motivational competence refers to the teacher educator's ability to inspire, encourage, and sustain learners' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Motivation significantly affects persistence, engagement, and overall academic performance.

According to Deci and Ryan (1985), intrinsic motivation flourishes when individuals experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Teacher educators must therefore create environments where student teachers feel valued, capable, and connected to their learning community.

Motivational competence includes:

- Establishing supportive teacher–student relationships
- Recognizing and affirming student efforts
- Providing meaningful learning tasks
- Encouraging autonomy and self-direction
- Demonstrating enthusiasm for teaching
- Modeling professional commitment

When teacher educators display positive attitudes and genuine passion for their profession, student teachers are more likely to internalize similar dispositions.

Motivation is not limited to emotional encouragement; it also involves structuring learning activities that promote curiosity, challenge, and intellectual growth. Educators must balance support with high expectations to cultivate resilience and professional identity.

Interrelationship Between Assessment and Motivation

Assessment practices directly influence learner motivation. Transparent criteria, constructive feedback, and recognition of progress enhance students' confidence and commitment. Conversely, unclear grading systems, unfair evaluation, or excessive focus on failure can diminish motivation.

Teacher educators must therefore integrate assessment and motivational strategies thoughtfully. Feedback should emphasize growth rather than deficiency, guiding learners toward continuous improvement.

Implications for Teacher Education

In contexts where teacher education emphasizes examination results over professional development, assessment may become punitive rather than developmental. Such approaches undermine intrinsic motivation and reduce learning to test preparation.

Strengthening assessment and motivational competence among teacher educators is essential for producing reflective, confident, and competent teachers. Without these competencies, teacher preparation risks focusing narrowly on content mastery while neglecting professional identity formation.

3.12 Assessment Competencies

Professional competence in teacher education is not confined to theoretical knowledge. It also requires practical knowledge derived from experience, contextual understanding, and systematic reflection. Practical knowledge and reflective practice are therefore fundamental dimensions of teacher educators' professional identity.

Practical Knowledge

Practical knowledge refers to the experiential understanding teachers develop through active engagement in teaching contexts. Unlike abstract theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge is situation-specific, context-sensitive, and action-oriented (Eraut, 1994). It emerges from direct involvement in classroom interaction, problem-solving, and instructional decision-making.

Teacher educators must possess extensive practical experience in addition to theoretical expertise. Without authentic classroom exposure, teacher educators may struggle to connect pedagogical theories with real-life instructional challenges.

Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory emphasizes that learning occurs through a cyclical process involving concrete experience, reflective observa-

tion, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. In teacher education, this cycle is essential. Teacher educators must model how theory informs practice and how practice reshapes theoretical understanding.

Practical knowledge includes:

- Classroom management strategies
- Instructional adaptation skills
- Conflict resolution abilities
- Awareness of learner diversity
- Contextual curriculum implementation
- Professional judgment in complex situations

When teacher educators lack practical classroom experience, they may rely excessively on theoretical discourse without demonstrating how such theories operate in real educational settings.

Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is the systematic examination of one's professional actions with the purpose of improvement. Schön (1983) introduced the concepts of "reflection-in-action" and "reflection-on-action," highlighting that professionals must think critically during practice and evaluate their actions afterward.

Reflection-in-action occurs when teachers modify their strategies in response to immediate classroom dynamics. Reflection-on-action involves retrospective analysis of teaching experiences to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for development.

Zeichner and Liston (1996) argue that reflective teaching enables educators to question assumptions, challenge routines, and adapt to evolving educational contexts. Reflective practice fosters continuous professional growth and prevents stagnation.

Teacher educators must model reflective habits by:

- Encouraging critical discussion
- Integrating reflective journals
- Promoting action research
- Facilitating peer feedback
- Demonstrating openness to constructive criticism

Without reflection, teaching may become routine and mechanical. Reflective competence transforms teaching into an intellectually engaged profession.

Integration of Practical Knowledge and Reflection

Practical knowledge and reflection are interdependent. Experience without reflection may lead to habitual practice, while reflection without experience lacks grounding. Effective teacher educators integrate both dimensions, demonstrating how classroom realities inform pedagogical reasoning.

Professional competence therefore requires the ability to:

- Connect theory to practice
- Evaluate instructional decisions
- Adapt to contextual challenges
- Learn from experience
- Engage in lifelong professional development

This integration strengthens teacher education programs by preparing student teachers to become adaptive, critical, and contextually responsive practitioners.

Implications for Ethiopian Teacher Education

In contexts where teacher educators are appointed primarily based on subject matter expertise rather than pedagogical and practical experience, the development of practical knowledge may be limited. When reflective practice is not systematically embedded in teacher education curricula, student teachers may graduate without developing critical professional awareness.

Strengthening practical and reflective competencies requires:

- Structured practicum supervision
- Professional development opportunities
- Institutional support for action research
- Clear professional standards

Teacher educators must exemplify reflective professionalism if teacher preparation programs are to produce competent, adaptable, and socially responsive teachers.

3.13 Motivational competencies

Motivation is an essential component of teaching. Teachers should have the competence of enhancing intrinsic motivation in the learners that help them to initiate and persist behavior, especially goal directed behavior. Motivation is “. . . *the process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained*” (Pintrich and Schunk, 2002:5. Teaching and learning go on well in the school environment and they are being carried out by qualified teachers who can motivate students to learn under diverse conditions (Creemers, 1994). Students who are intrinsically motivated undertake an activity for its own sake, for the enjoyment it provides, the learning it permits, or the feelings of accomplishment it evokes, unlike extrinsically motivated students perform in order to obtain some reward (Lepper, 1988). Teacher educator with professional competence knows how to create relevant and appropriate motivation and how to capitalize on existing intrinsic motivation (Harris & Muijs, 2005; Hardre & Reeve, 2003).

Teachers possessing professional competence can motivate through environmental design, arranging attractive classroom-learning environment in ways that promote students' motivation. Teachers, who create warm welcoming and accepting students, promote persistent effort and favorable attitudes toward teaching and learning (Beare, Caldwell, & Millikan, 1989) can motivate the learners. Besides, teachers can motivate students by using instructional strategies which include joyful instruction by being friendly, adding educative humor, fun, exciting stories, happiness in their profession, caring, loving children and their job. These conditions inspire students to respond with interest and motivation (Condry & Chambers, 1978). Creating an environment where learners are actively involved in their own learning, such as cooperative learning and group problem solving exercises; (Niederhauser, 1997; Austin *et al*, 2003), has a power to motivate the learners. Hence, competent professional teacher educators should be equipped with motivation competence.

3.14 Teachers' Practical Knowledge competence

The content of practical knowledge includes the knowledge of subject matter, curriculum, instruc-

tion, classroom management, self and the milieu of schooling. Teachers need to have knowledge of the interaction between teacher and students, colleagues, administration and school environment, that developed through school-based teacher education. School-based teacher education is based on the assumptions that teacher education should be based on the real problems student teachers need to address in order to do their work in schools and classrooms (Bullough, 1997). Teachers are expected to develop lesson planning, implementation skills, classroom management and nurturing professional and personal qualities. Teacher educators should develop skills, attitudes, values and beliefs in the student teachers. Schools are learning places for both student teachers and children, where it should create excitement, engagement, passion, challenge, creativity and joy' (Hargreaves, 1995; Michalak, 2004). Teaching practice provides the student teacher with hands-on experience in schools, it is often the most valued experience by students during their course.

In the classroom teaching practices learning issues and teaching methods should be emphasized. The learning issues includes creating the learning environment, lesson planning, encouraging students to actively participate and learn independent, assessing learners progress and accommodating diversity in the classroom. Teaching methods includes how teacher organize practical work of the learners, creating cooperative, whole class learning, support, mentoring learners and encouraging problem-based learning assessments. Colleges of teacher education need to work attaching their student teachers to the realities of life, closely work with school practitioners, instead of working from ivory tower.

The school based learning may be greatly enhanced by the utilization available resources in the institutions. Utilizing technologies make learning effective and easier, consume less time and help to search the type of materials they use for their professional development (Brown, Lewis & Harclerod, 1959). Teachers' should be acquainted with the teaching resources and basic equipment, such as ICT and other educational technologies. Fundamentally, educational technology introduces teachers to the evaluation, selection, and use of audiovisual

materials and equipment including films, slides, transparencies, projectors, globes, charts, maps, bulletin boards, programmed materials, information retrieval systems, and instructional television. Educational technologies are important not to substitute a teacher with professional competencies, like plasma, but to complement teachers taught and students learning. However, there have been predictions that new teaching and learning technology would replace teachers, textbooks and even schools. This may omit the hidden curriculum that come as result of teachers' emotion and the context he or she is teaching. Of course, Professional Digital Competence (PDC) is crucial in teacher education.

When Ethiopia has little or concern for Professional Digital competence other nations are creating high priority in teacher education (TE) to educate and prepare student teachers to meet the changing demands of new technology in their teaching practice (Livingstone, 2016; McGarr & McDonagh, 2019; UNESCO (2011). They underlines that teacher education should ensure that future teachers can help pupils to develop digital competence. Teacher educators have a substantial responsibility for enabling educational environments that will help student teachers to develop the sufficiently high levels of professional digital competence considered necessary for teaching in the classroom of tomorrow (Baran, Canbazoglu Bilici, Sari, & Tondeur, 2019). This means teacher educator's level of PDC is important (Jackson & Burch, 2019). Besides all competencies, technology proficiency should be one of focuses of knowledge and skill area for teacher educators (Instefjord and Munthe, 2016). Teacher educators should be digital role models and they are more than just teachers. This means, they teach future teachers, who will then teach pupils in school (Uerz *et al.*, 2018). According to Tondeur *et al.* (2019), teacher educators can be seen as gatekeepers in providing the next generation of teachers with possibilities to develop competences suitable for teaching and learning. They use technology for their own teaching and teach service teachers' professional digital competence (Instefjord and Munthe (2017). Hence, issuing policy that enforces teacher education institutions to integrate digital competence into teacher education and career development of their teacher education

system is very crucial. Furthermore, equipping individuals with digital competence for new ways of thinking, ways of working, tools for working and living in the contemporary world cannot be put aside.

3.15 Teacher's Attitude towards their Profession

I personally believe that teachers' personality is the most critical factor in successful teaching. As stated by Cooper (1998:153), "*If teachers have warmth, empathy, sensitivity, enthusiasm, and humor, they are likely to be successful than if they lack these characteristics*". Without these attributes an individual is unlikely to be a good teacher. Cooper (1998;153) believe again that "*Effective teachers are fair, democratic, responsive, understanding, kindly, stimulating, original, alert, attractive, responsible, steady, poised, and confident*". He further described ineffective teacher as "*partial, autocratic, aloof, restricted, harsh, dull, stereotyped, apathetic, unimpressive, evasive, erratic, excitement, and uncertain*". Teacher attitude may be seen from four categories: teachers' attitude towards self, teachers' towards children and relationship between self and children, towards peers and pupils' and parents, and the teachers' attitude towards the subject matter.

Teacher attitude towards self is an important aspect of teachers' attitude. Unless teachers recognize their own needs and anxieties, they may be unlikely to understand and empathize with their students' needs or expression of anxiety. They may not recognize those students' inabilities, needs, inattentiveness, impudence, or irritability may be the result of anxiety. Teachers' anxiety may make the students irritable, causing the students in turn to feel and to show similar symptoms. Self-understanding of the teachers may be achieved through teachers' education programs, through the integration of affective domains in the content teaching, through professional courses, such as psychology, methods of teaching, special needs education and the like, through reading books about teachers, classroom observation of model teachers and the like. If teachers achieve this part, their attitude towards children could be caring and positive.

Children are sensitive observers of adult behavior,

and they often see, and become preoccupied with, aspects of the teachers' attitude towards them of which the teachers may not be unaware. Teachers' effectiveness may be reduced by this feelings and the result could be strong dislike for particular pupils and obvious fondness for others; biases toward or against particular ethnic group; a bias towards certain kinds of students' behavior, such as docility or inquisitiveness and discomfort in working with children who have disabilities. Hence, teachers' negative attitudes need to be converted into positive direction, before they start teaching children and spoil them with discriminations and biases through effective teachers' education program discussed throughout this paper. Generally, teachers need to be genuine, value the learners, and develop empathic understanding that may be achieved through professional teacher education programs. Teachers' attitude towards themselves and toward children may also apply to their attitudes towards peers and parents.

Teachers' attitude towards peers and parents is another important factor need to be discussed. Due to their inappropriate attitude, teachers may have problems with authority. Teacher may also seek cheap recognition and act negatively towards children and parents. Some other teachers may not tolerate authority, parents and students. Effective teachers, work well with colleagues, and parents to empower children to achieve, show attitudes of acceptance. Such teachers may deal with parents and teachers being genuine, value other persons as worthy in their own right, and show empathy.

3.16 Teacher Education Institutions for Development of Competencies

Teacher education is part of a country's educational system, organized in Universities and Colleges. Teacher Education institutions like Kotebe University of Education (KUE) established recently can create teacher identity; bridge the gap between theory and practice, balance between subject studies and pedagogical studies. It can freely contribute to a higher status of teachers' teacher educator and student teachers that help to enhance science and technology for better life of its citizen. Independent and free teachers institute can decide the 'why', the 'what' and the 'how' of teacher educa-

tion (Lundgren, 1983). Increased freedom is often associated with more accountability. The government may determine the why and what of teacher education. Besides, the government is responsible to establish teacher education institution, fund and demand quality education, and evaluate whether the outcomes have been achieved or not. Teacher education institutions organize the programs within their place, develop and implement curriculum without internal and external influence. Teacher education institutes and teacher educators are responsible to design the curriculum, and develop the strategy of the 'how', the way in which these outcomes can be achieved. Such outcome-based approaches give teacher education institutes and for teacher educators freedom, responsibility and accountable for decisions, organize inputs, processes the implementation and achieve the outcome of the quality of teacher educators in the country. Simply put, responsible to change 'cast-iron into steal', ending the incompetence of teachers in Ethiopia.

Teachers incompetence is the legacy of the near past and trends that Ethiopia has experienced in the history of teacher education. Because of it organizational problems, teacher education in Ethiopia could not able to bring desirable change, and the Ethiopian education has been deteriorating in quality from year to year. Clear direction has never been in the place to create strong teacher Education program for the nation; except the attempt of Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) and the current decision of the government in founding Kotebe University of Education. TESO had been aborted by the Ministry of Education, after few years encouraging development in creating competent high school teachers. Kotebe may work hard to realize the goal of TESO, soon, reforming all the limitations of TESO had. Will Kotebe Education University (KUE) bring significant changing in quality education including teachers' education? How KUE and other Teachers Colleges, escape from the adverse effect of the negative legacy of the past and create teachers with high level professional competency? I expect radial change from KUE; because it is relatively autonomous, not oppressed by insiders, like other Education Colleges under Universities.

Education Colleges, those are under some selected universities are still in chaos. Its organizational structure may not allow creating teachers' professional competency with identified philosophical direction. The present teacher education is organized in four Colleges, with various vision, goal, mission, values and readiness. College of Social Sciences, College of Humanity, Language, Communication and Journalism, and College of Natural and Computational Science, are not established for relevant and appropriate teacher education. Their vision, goal, mission, values and readiness are not the same with philosophy of the right teachers' education and training. They can teach pure content that may be divorced from pedagogical content knowledge. After decline of TESO, students attended three years content knowledge and joined Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT), with the assumption that creating strong graduate in content knowledge can be good input for teachers' education; but, how was that program? Were the students successful in the content knowledge? Have they developed positive attitude towards teaching profession? This must be explored through research.

From my personal and other colleagues' observations, those who joined PGDT after graduating in content knowledge have been observed and most of them were found with serious deficient in content knowledge. Their attitude towards teaching was not also desirable; the majority of them did not like to be teachers. They simply joined teaching profession, because, they do not have other employment opportunities. Furthermore, they joined PGDT with negative attitude; because, the philosophy, vision, mission, and readiness of the institute they got Bachelor degree were not similar to education institutions. In the present organization of teacher education in four colleges, the responsibility and accountability is unclear. If quality failed, one may convey the failure to the other; and if achieved, each may claim, it is because of their quality education and training. In both cases we can see hostility between the colleges. Then, what are the solutions? Professionals in pedagogical sciences have no any single bias on the importance of content knowledge. I strongly believe that content knowledge is important, but should not be divorced from pedagogical sciences, and/or peda-

gogical content knowledge. Besides content and pedagogical knowledge, professional teachers need to be imaginative, interested, curious, empathetic, friendly and above all hardworking in order to be effective in the classroom.

4 Personal reflections and Conclusion

My personal reflections may be observed in all parts of this article, here and there, with referenced materials. However, this part is my strong final keynote I want to address. Quality teachers are architects of good education that determines our future. Good education promotes all-rounded development of an individual. Well trained doctors, lawyers, engineers, architects and so on, are results of teachers with high quality education; and the education of teacher depends largely on the system of teacher education programs, including teacher educators. One of the arguments about teacher education in Ethiopia is found to be on who should be teacher educators. Some believes that any person with strong content knowledge can be a teacher educator. It is true that they may preach in a traditional way, the content of the subject matter. The questions is, can they create teachers who possess professional competencies in instruction, classroom management, teaching methodology, education technology, motivation skills, interventional skills for children with diversities, assessment skill and have positive attitude towards their profession? It is clear that in Ethiopia, educating qualified teachers those who can teach students for the demands of the societal success in developments has been deteriorating from time to time. There are many reasons for this; but, the major reason could be due to lack of clear policy, regarding organizational structure of teacher education institutions and teacher educators, as distinct professional group. Of course, there is some directive that has been issued insisting teacher educators to go for professional development, such as HDP.

Teacher education is a complex and very demanding profession ever; where highly experienced teachers used to teach at primary or secondary level should involve with their current academic merit. Unfortunately, highly experienced, moderately experienced and newly employed instructors with no experience involve as teacher educator in Ethiopia. Then, how

do we expect quality teacher education from these malpractices? Some countries have a policy that allows them to select teacher educators from best teachers of primary and secondary schools, with appropriate procedure of transition from school teacher to teacher educator, with the assumption that they will continue being models for their student teachers as their real experiences and theories are reflected in their teaching practices (Murray & Male, 2005), at lower level.

In Ethiopia teacher educators' identity is not established yet; the gap between theory and practice of teaching is not identified; integrating the content and pedagogy is not appropriately in a place; and the balance between subject studies and pedagogical studies are not clear; because, there is no clear policy that guides these practices. Policy would be in a place to define what and the how of teacher education. The policy would define further, the societal setting in which the teacher education takes place; the organizations' set up and the types of degrees and teachers qualification, including the nomenclature. According to Swennen and Klink (2009), as part of countries education system, teacher education has its own place within the institutional structure.

Teachers need to be educated and be trained to be academically qualified as well as professionally competent educators; to be able to perform in their post and bring significant changes, primarily, in teacher candidates and then in the life of their students and the generation. Teacher educators are those who integrate academic and professional competencies focusing on what students learn in schools. Content and practical studies need to be integrated by bringing teaching practice and pedagogical theorization closer to each other; rather than, lecturing contents only. This is to help future teachers to independently distinguish the problems in their work and solve those using practical and theoretical methods.

Teacher educators should emphasize research in the teaching student teachers that helps them to integrate and base their teachings on it, or develop evidence-based teaching. Qualified teacher educators can integrate pedagogical studies with subject studies in every teaching they carry out. Thus,

teacher educators should be well educated and experienced with positive attitude towards teaching professions, to educate teachers for schools. To produce such quality teachers, professionalism and academics must go hand in hand so that there are no discrepancies in the job effectiveness of teachers. For teaching profession to be effectively performed there has to be a balance between academic, professional training and positive attitude towards their students.

The very best teachers do not tie students down; they pull students along; they are visionaries. Unlike being a great scholar in non-pedagogical knowledge, being a great teacher requires a passion for his profession. After all, teaching is not just about ideas; it is about engaging hearts and minds in the process of learning. These qualities can create an excellence in students and teachers become memorable among their students and the community. Good teachers inspire students to work harder while poor teachers inspire students to skip class. Quality teachers are those who inspire for students to compete against themselves, and cooperate with others, to take on tasks that seem to exceed their grasp, to discover and develop their real determination as thinkers. At the same time, the very best teachers also seem to be the ones who never stop learning themselves; they are the folks who never quit reading new books, listening to new voices, or discussing new ideas, whose quest for understanding is never end up and lifelong students.

Professionally competent teachers have a passion in their lives, a deep regard for their students, (love their students) and farsighted. Furthermore, to be effective in the classroom teachers need to be curious, imaginative, empathetic, interesting, friendly and hardworking, thereby creating a learning environment that enhances and strengthens the learning disposition of the students. They also consider, children with special needs and vulnerability, provide support and enrich learning, through organizing meaningful material such as ICT. Professionally competent teachers contribute not only for a given nation, but also contribute knowledge and practices for the whole world, if they graduate from well-established teacher education institutions and highly qualified teacher educators.

Contrary to these, teachers produced in the disorganized and full of chaotic system, cannot produce teacher educators, and in return cannot produce professionally competent school teachers. Teachers without professional competencies are ridiculous and dangerous. Such teachers are not good models of the generation and may not help a nation like Ethiopia to escape from poverty. They give high level pride for themselves, rather than creating pride in their students. They humiliate, rather than proving humility. I would like to then, underscore that if Ethiopia gives priority to produce quality and professionally competent teacher educators and then school teachers, the generation can make Ethiopia today and tomorrow to the better position in the world. If we are able to make the greatest teachers for Ethiopia, our civilization and our quality of life could be dynamic ever, and our poverty will be invisible among our nation, and remain a history. If we consider high level of teacher educators competence a greater achievement in education can be realized; this means low level of teachers competence resulted in poorer education.

Ethiopia really needs teacher education system that meets the demands of Ethiopian people in this 21st century. There should be a policy that certifies teacher educators as an exclusive professional to educate teacher at all levels. The certification can help to improve the quality of teacher educators and protecting the teaching profession from unprofessional practices, which can impair the image of the teaching profession. Furthermore, it also extends to the level of defending the society from unethical and unprofessional educational institutions, which yield poor, unproductive and dangerous teachers.

Research for Future

Finally, this paper is not without limitation. It doesn't empirically assess the teacher educators' professional competencies and attitudes in Ethiopia. In the future, other researchers may look at the following questions and conduct researches for better understanding of teachers' professional competencies in Ethiopia and its contribution for the nation's development. How many teachers in Ethiopia from kindergarten to tertiary level have favorable attitude towards teaching profession? How many of them possess appropriate professional competen-

cies? Why teachers in Ethiopia didn't contribute to enhance quality education and societal changes in development? Why the Ethiopian education fail to eradicate poverty and, bring significant social changes? Who decide on the fate and direction of teacher education? What is the best international trend and practices in teacher education programs that brings significant changes? Can such practices be applied to the Ethiopian conditions? What will be the prospects of teacher education program in Ethiopia? Why higher education couldn't significantly contributed to the development of teacher education system and professional competencies? Why the Ethiopian natural resources such as oil is not discovered by Ethiopians and used? Why our education does not contribute for technological inventions? Why we are inefficient in medical provisions? Why does education fail to help us feed ourselves? Why we depend on others? Why teacher education is not given high priority? Why teacher education has been controversial and the agenda are on the tables, ever. . . etc.?

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