



PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES OF CONTEXTUAL TEACHING STRATEGIES: IN CASE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS TRAINERS AT ADOLA COLLEGE OF TEACHERS EDUCATION

¹Name of 1st Author, **Mr. Habte Tefera., MA.** ^{2nd} Author, **Dr. PECHETTY SVR BABU., PhD**

1.Department of Curriculum and Teacher Education,
2.Department of Educational Planning and Management

1. Lecturer and Head of the Department. 2. Associate Professor
College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, Bule Hora University, Bule Hora, Ethiopia

Abstract: *The general objective of this study was to assess the way Adola college of teacher's education trainers delivering instructional practice and preparing learning materials and factors hindering their practices. To realize this qualitative method and case study design were employed. Both primary and secondary data were collected from 20 trainers, one academic vice dean and education stream head. The tools of data collection were semi-structured interview, observation checklist, focus group discussion and document analysis. Study trustworthiness was checked by considering credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the data. Thematic analysis with paraphrasing and triangulating result was used. The result of this study indicated that trainers were using local examples, fictions and play but they were not inviting Abba Gada, elders, early childhood experts, church leaders in their teaching and did not giving field-based assignments for early childhood teachers. In addition to this, trainers were using local resources for materials production but they failed to link with local experiences and did not realize diverse interest for local community. Among challenges in implementing contextual teaching strategies were lack of qualified early childhood experts, support, training, workshop room, experience sharing program, technical skill of trainers and program newness were major one. Thus, the researcher recommends that, Oromia education bureau should hire early childhood experts, provide incentive, internship and experience sharing program for trainers. Adola college of teacher's education should organized, seminars, discussion with local elders, Abba Gada, church leaders and open model pre-primary school for practicum purpose. Trainers should learn about local community, and practice of early childhood education.*

IndexTerms - Contextual Teaching Strategies, Challenges, College of Teachers Education, Early Childhood Teachers, Practices and Trainers

INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Care and Education teacher certification programs are meant to provide training and educational opportunities for early childhood educators (Yismaw, 2022). In doing so, college of teacher's education should have to consider the way they are equipping early childhood teachers by

relevant domain of learning. Having this, contextualized teaching strategies is a way of relating content, teaching practices and learning materials to relevant and meaningful situations in the lives of students (Kenea, 2014). Therefore, trainers should take in account the early childhood teachers backgrounds like language, culture, socio-economic, learning experience, and learning style while they prepare learning materials and teaching practices.

According to Woldegiorgis & Doeverspeck (2013), the general public has left fragile institutions that lack social legitimacy in African countries. This indicates that Africans' capacity to develop educational programs that are both financially feasible and socially significant has been impeded by their reliance on donors and their patrons, which has also stunted the expansion of African institutions. Higher education establishments in Africa have, nonetheless, contributed to nation-building, economic expansion, Africanization, and the creation of the knowledge economy in addition to taking on international tasks that are not indigenous to the continent. Teachers in the majority of African nations receive their pedagogical training in Teacher Training Colleges, where the focus is mostly on theoretical approaches to child development, pedagogy, and learning, with little consideration given to the social environment or conditions of the learners (UNESCO, 2016).

A study conducted by Mchombo (2014) revealed that African education systems are decontextualized in many ways. This means that the implementation of educational practices in Africa is Western-based and excludes African indigenous knowledge, culture, and socio-economic backgrounds. Additionally, Katonga (2017) pointed out that in Zambia, there was a lack of considering community culture and living standards when implementing the curriculum. Furthermore, the researcher noted that teachers' apathy and lack of cultural knowledge and skills, as well as the ability to integrate indigenous knowledge into formal schooling, were serious. Thus, most of African teaching strategies were western dependent with the exclusion of original knowledge.

Ethiopia is witnessing a new trend of introducing early childhood teacher training programs at certificate, diploma, bachelor's and master's degree levels in various colleges of education and some universities. This is an encouraging initiative to influence the outline of pre-primary teacher training, which in turn will have a direct impact on the quality of pre-primary education in the region (MoE,2017). In doing so, study conducted by Kenea (2014) on early childhood program shown that teachers should have to know how children recognize the meaning of what they are learning, what children are exposed to relates to children's experiences, it is necessary to know how the "valuable knowledge" (as well as the educational process) chosen for the purpose serves as a framework for children. Thus, it is up to the teacher to identify if there is a gap between the proposed curriculum elements/materials and the child's situation.

According to a study done by Teshager and Bishaw and Dagnew(2021), teachers do not provide opportunities for learning which enable students to investigate the context of knowledge in order to learn how it develops through cultural and social influences. In fact, this problem could arise because teachers might lack the necessary competence for dealing with contextualized learning through research and experimentation in a classroom. Teachers shall be expected to follow the cultural values of students and

societies in this context related investigation and experimental activity. Kenea (2020) concluded that crafting localized curriculum materials based on the national preschool education curriculum framework should be with the participation of local educators, elders, and resource persons from local civil sectors to have relevant teaching practice. During the process, careful account has been taken of local resources such as tales, riddles, songs, music, dances, game materials, cultural values and practice that are inherent in a community.

The curriculum of early childhood education in the Oromia region does not meet developmental standards for individuality, age, stage, culture context or meaningfulness to young children, according to (Geletu, 2023). In doing so, the Oromia education bureau has been providing training opportunities for early childhood teachers in some selected colleges of teachers' education by naming Barnoota Sadarkaa Tokkoffaan Duraa(BSTD). The Adola College of Teachers is one of the teacher training colleges established in Oromia from 2012 to train primary teachers, located in an area called Guji. Under instructions from the Regional Education Office, the College now provides training for teachers of children aged up to five years.

Based on researcher current residence and informal information, the college is providing training without having any early childhood professional. Thus, the researcher believes that teachers may lack contextual skills while implementing contextualized instructional practice and learning material preparation. In addition to this, there is no current study conducted on the practices and challenges of contextual teaching strategies in early childhood teacher education in Ethiopia in general and Adola college of teacher's education in particular. So, the researcher purposefully selected this study to address the practices and challenges of contextual teaching strategies by early childhood teachers' trainers of Adola college of teacher's education

The learning process should have a higher meaning because it must be contextualised and the students' knowledge linked to local and personal events that impact them. Consequently, knowledge based on the learners' prior knowledge needs to be contextualized. Utech's (2008) research recommends that instructors prepare classroom teaching using real world resources, activities, interests, needs and context from the lives of students in order to contextualize curricula. Because contextualized lessons serve as an effective means of doing this, and because a rigorous curriculum gives students the ability to learn, develop or test certain skills and abilities. In the light of this, focus should therefore be given to training practice and contextualising educational resources for students so that they can interact with things currently in place within the community.

Different researches have been conducted on preschool teacher education in Ethiopia. For instance, a study conducted by Abraha & Mendisu (2022) on the quality of pre-service teacher training in Ethiopia and its impact on quality learning outcomes found that the pre-service teacher training curriculum focuses only on subject content and focuses on motor skills and social-emotional development categories were found to be neglected, some teacher training colleges used English as the language of instruction. However, this study only focused on the child's overall development and the medium of instruction. Therefore, whether teacher

training colleges connect their teaching practices and the creation of teaching materials with students' everyday experiences was not addressed.

A study conducted by Yismaw (2022) on the pre-school teacher training program at Kotebe University of Education found that early childhood teacher training programs are under critical pressure due to lack of trainers, financial and material constraints, and uncertainty in university selection criteria. It has become clear that they are facing significant challenges in trainees, overcrowded workplaces, lack of contact with social institutions. The focus of this study is on common challenges in universities of education. Therefore, this study differs significantly from this study, which did not demonstrate how teacher training institutions contextualize both materials and pedagogical practices.

A study by Hoot, Szente, and Tadesse (2006) on early childhood teacher training in Ethiopia shown that the current state of early childhood teacher training in Ethiopia is one of the worst in the world. For this reason, this study primarily focuses on program progress rather than explicitly pointing out the major challenges teachers face in preparing students for the future teaching profession.

A study conducted by Zemariam (2014) on training policies, practices, and challenges for early childhood care and education teachers in Ethiopia found that government oversight of early childhood care and education teacher training accreditation has led to a lack of resources and facilities in training. This study focuses on leadership practices and access to resources in teacher training institutions. There is no indication of the implementation of context-specific teaching strategies in teacher training colleges.

The study conducted by Tomora (2022) on the preparation of pre-service teachers at Hawassa College of Teacher Education focuses on the critical examination of the students' teaching experience and there are no post-internship meetings or materials not related to the internship. It has been shown that, an attempt was made to point out issues related to internships at teacher training universities, such as transportation, timing, placement of interns, placement of mentors, language of instruction, and evaluation methods. However, this study only focused on internships and did not examine overall teaching practices or how teachers prepare learning materials for students.

The main rationales for the selection of this study were presented as follow: firstly, investing on children education is about building strong future generation. This, mean that in order to build house for long period of time we must invest on the base of the house. The same is true that if we want to build strong future generation we must invest on today generation. Secondly, there is a gap which not addressed by another researcher. Thus, as tried to indicate on the above, most of the study did not address about the implementation contextual teaching strategies in early childhood teacher education in Ethiopia college of teachers education in general and study area in particular. So, as academic staff of higher education, the researcher is responsible and eligible to identify research gap and conduct study on the area.

Thirdly, the study more relevant with researcher field of study. This means that all field of study has its own contribution in the scientific knowledge by conducting research in the area of its responsible. So, as curriculum and instruction academic staff the issue of teaching strategies is a major area of its concern. Fourthly, as per information of the researcher, study area teachers are implementing the program without having any early childhood profession. Thus, the researcher believe that teachers may challenge to

implement the program by linking teaching strategies with students-teachers learning background. Finally, the researcher is interested to conduct study on the implementation of contextual teaching strategies and purposefully selected to address the existing practice and their challenges in the study area.

Research questions

Based on the gap identified in the statement of the problems and the purpose of this study, the following basic research questions were formulated.

1. How do Adola Collage of teacher's education trainers are delivering instructional practice
2. How do Adola Collage of teacher's education trainers are preparing learning materials?
3. What are the major challenges of Adola Collage of teacher's education trainers while implementing contextual teaching strategies?

General objective of the study

The general objective of this study was to assess the way Adola college of teachers education trainers delivering instructional practice and preparing learning materials and factors hindering their practices.

Specific objectives of the study

The specific objectives of this study were listed as follow

1. To explore the way trainers of Adola college of teacher's education are delivering instructional practice
2. To explore the way trainers of Adola college of teacher's education are preparing learning materials
3. To identify the major challenges of Adola college teachers' education trainers in implementing contextual teaching strategies

Significance of the study

Every study has its own contribution in the area of its focus. In doing so, this study will provide the following contributions. It gives clues for policy makers, curriculum planners, and practitioners to give priority to contextualized teaching by showing gaps in their practices. In addition to this, it will serve as a reference for researchers who are interested in conducting studies in the area. Moreover, it will give insight to Adola college of teacher's education teachers while they are practicing learning material preparation and teaching practice and mechanism to reduce factors hindering their practices.

Delimitation of the study

It's difficult to address all things at once due to time, budget, knowledge and experience. Thus, this study were delimited in its geographical coverage, conceptually and methodologically. So, geographically delimited to Adola college of teacher's education. Conceptually delimited with the existing practices and challenges of early childhood teachers trainers in contextual teaching strategies both in learning materials preparation and teaching practices in the study area. Methodologically, delimited with qualitative research method and case study research design based on the nature of the objective of this study. The participants of this study were delimited to academic affairs vice dean, education stream head and early childhood teacher education trainers of Adola college of teacher's education.

Research method and Design

The researcher used qualitative research methodology with a view to achieving the objective of this study. Qualitative research is an investigation procedure for understanding that seeks to examine a societal or human problem by means of different methods of inquiry. The study is conducted in a natural setting by the researcher, who develops an extensive and comprehensive picture of events, analyses words, reports on important aspects of information (Creswell, 2014). Thus, according to the nature of the objectives of this study, the researcher was used qualitative research method and case study research design was employed. According to Priya (2021) a case study is a qualitative design in which a researcher examines a program, event, activity, process, or one or more people in detail. To gain detailed insights about the study, the researcher used a case study research design.

Population of the Study

The target population of this study were trainers, academic vice dean and education stream head of selected Adola colleges Teachers Education. Thus, there are 30 trainers, one(1) education stream head and academic vice dean in this college.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

Among 30 active trainers, the researcher was used 20 trainers by using purposive sampling technique. The reason for choosing purposive sampling technique is they are directly teaching early childhood teachers. Thus, the issue was more relevant to them more than any other trainers. Thus, 20 trainers were the participants of this study. In addition to this, education stream head and college academic vice dean were the participants of this study by using purposive sampling technique. The reason for using purposive sampling technique is they have more information than the other. So, one education stream head and academic vice dean were the participants of this study.

Procedures of data collection

For the purpose of this study, the researcher was followed the following procedure. First, interview, focus group discussion, observation checklist guide was prepared. Secondly, tool trustworthiness was checked by friends, psychology, curriculum, sociology, and language experts. Thirdly, permission letter from the department was collected to contact Adola College of Teachers Education. Finally, selected trainers, academic vice dean and education college stream head were contacted and collect data by giving great attention to study ethical consideration.

Trustworthiness of the study

To realize the objective of this study, the trustworthiness was checked by considering credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the data. To realize the credibility, the researcher has shown the prepared to peers, psychology, sociology, and language teachers. For transferability, researcher was used multiple data collection tools. For dependability of collected data, the research was used in depth discussion in each objective of the study and show the result for peers and evaluator. For conformity of the study, the researcher gave more time and used different coding system to reduce biases.

Method of Data Analysis.

The researcher will use thematic analysis techniques to manage data. According to Camic, Long, Panter, Rindskopf, & Sher (2012) thematic analysis is a way of identifying, organizing and offering information on thematic themes across data sets in order to systematically identify, organize and offer insight. Thus, the researcher was categorized basic research question as a team, by the paraphrasing results and triangulated the responses respondents.

Ethical Consideration

For the successful accomplishment of this study, the researcher was considered the following ethical considerations. Firstly, respondent's voluntarism was considered during data collection. This means respondents of this study was freely participate on interview and Focus group discussion. Secondly, full right was given to respondents to know study purpose, its benefit, risk of the study and agree to participate of responding on prepared focus group discussion and interview. Thirdly, respondent's anonymity and confidentiality were kept by researcher. This means personal security of respondents were secured and no respondents were not requested to write their name and not forced to give their information without their consent. Fourthly, great attention were given to respondents keep them from any physical, social, psychological and other all harms during data collection. Fifth and finally, this study was protected from plagiarism by proper paraphrasing and citation both in text and reference body.

Result and Discussion

The general objective of this study was to assess the ways Adola college of teachers' education trainers deliver instructional practice and preparing learning materials and factors hindering their practices. In doing so, semi-structured interviews, Focus Group Discussion, observation and document analysis were used as data collection tools collected from teachers, academic vice dean and education stream head by categorizing them in theme.

Theme 1: Responses about the way trainers of Adola college of teachers' education are delivering instructional practice.

Regarding objective one respondents responded as follows: One interviewee said trainers are trying to use local examples to make the lesson more understandable for early childhood teachers. Due to this, they believe that their trainers were contextualizing teaching practice at the college. Moreover, observation results realized that trainers tried to use local fiction like Kubbaa kiyya agartani(Have you seen my ball). Thus, we can say that trainers were trying to link teaching practice with a learner's learning background. Study conducted by Anyanwu & Iwuamadi (2015) realized that play-based learning is an important aspect of early childhood education, providing children with meaningful and fun ways to learn and explore the world around them, and providing children with hands-on learning that stimulates creativity, curiosity, and problem-solving skill. However, one interviewee added that the majority of trainers were not giving assignments which students can complete by going out to the local community. So, early childhood teachers may face challenges in their future teaching practice by connecting learning with the existing social life of early childhood students.

Interviewee two said that trainers were not inviting local community elders or leaders like Abba Gada, elders and church leaders to the classroom to share local experience or to talk about local issues. In doing so, students were missing local experiences like social norms, values, culture and morality in their learning. Thus, it's possible to say that teachers were not teaching or adding local experience rather than teaching according to their experience only. In addition to this, interviewee two also added that teachers are not inviting early childhood experts to the classroom to share existing practices and challenges of the program. This indicated to us there is a problem with teaching students based on current existing practice of early childhood care standards. During observation time, a researcher did not see any early childhood experts, Abba Gada and church leaders in study area.

Focus group discussion result also shown that teachers were try to challenge students to link what they have learned with their prior experience and community life. However, there is little differences between what we are teaching and what is in the module given from Oromia education bureau. This has shown that even if teachers were challenging students to link what they have learned with prior experience, they were challenged to enact curriculum due to they were following written curriculum. Observation result also shown that teachers were tried to teach by using role play based in which students try to practice what is in the local community.

Theme 2: Responses about practice of teachers in learning material preparation

Concerning to objective two, One interviewee said that teachers were trying to prepare learning materials from locally available resources like carton, woods, metals and others. However, there is misunderstanding among teachers in considering local community life like local beliefs, norms, values, traditions while they were preparing learning materials for their trainees. Document analysis result also indicated that teachers were not using picture locally well-known person and things in which trainees may understand materials easily. One interviewee also added that teachers were missing inculcate current community issues in learning materials preparation. This is indicated that teachers were missing to consider what is in local community while they were preparing learning materials.

Interviewee two said that teachers were respecting individual differences but they were not considering those difference in learning materials preparation. Document analysis result also indicated that there is no picture and materials that indicate diversity in religion, culture, and dialect in which trainees may learn how to contextualize learning materials by considering individual differences in their future carer. Interviewee two added that trainers were trying to use available materials as a sample while they were trying to produce materials. This can indicate that teachers were trying to minimize knowledge gap in learning material preparation.

Focus group discussion result has shown that due to prepared module is not sufficient, teachers were translating learning materials from online by using paraphrasing and using simple languages. Even if they were translating materials they were facing difficulty in measuring its appropriateness for the subject matter and the learners' capacity or levels of learning. They said also, teachers were not organizing workshop and projects that is relevant to their profession. Thus, we can conclude that majority of teachers were dependant on prepared learning materials and they solely practicing learning materials preparation from locally

available resources. Document analysis result also indicated that teachers were trying to produce learning materials from locally available resource but they were missing to link those with learner learning backgrounds. For instance, using pictures well known person while they were going to prepare materials about patriotism.

Theme 3: Responses about challenges of teachers in practicing contextual teaching strategies

As per information collected from respondents, both one interviewee and two said as follows. Even if teachers were trying contextualized both teaching practice and learning materials preparation, they were facing the following factors. Those were unavailability qualified early childhood professionals who can guide them their practices, shortage and irrelevant training opportunity for trainees about early childhood teaching standards, lack of experience exchange opportunity with other colleges and lack of field based or practicum opportunities were the major one. Study conducted by Rahayuningsih(2016) realized that practice based learning is an important time for teacher training students to put into practice what they have learned at College. During the internship, student teachers learn many aspects of becoming a good teacher. During observation time also there is no workshop room that support teachers to produce learning materials preparation. Thus, we can conclude that teachers were practicing the program without having relevant profile and support from concerned body.

Focus group discussion result also indicated that there is no report and discussion system both at stream and college level about contextualization. Thus, consideration is not given for it and just they were practicing according to guidelines given from higher official. In addition to this, they said teachers were demotivated to practice extra work in which they need to get additional incentive. However, due to any incentive were not given for them they were not interested to practice contextualization. Study conducted by Imam Makruf, Fauzi Muharom, Achmad Buchori, Rita Aryani, & Suhendri, (2020) have shown that providing incentives has a significant impact on teacher performance. It is related to the emotional level of teachers when approaching their work. The higher the teacher's income, the higher the teacher's loyalty. Providing incentives is a triggering tool to improve and develop teacher performance. By providing incentives, teachers can actually continue to improve their performance and service.

According to focus group discussion results teachers were lack of technical skill in producing learning materials. Thus, experts from materials preparation should be hired in the study area to support the practice of teachers. According to McDonald (2016), it is important for teachers to have background knowledge related to the profession they have been teaching in order for students to easily master the content they need to learn. The same is true in this study, trainers need to get training about materials production. Furthermore, they said that the newness of the program is a major challenge for teachers in which all necessary information about the program is too difficult to get for teachers.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the above result the following conclusions were made.

- Concerning to teaching delivery, trainers were using local examples, fiction, and play but they were missing to participate early childhood teachers via assignments, projects, and experiences. There is no

experience sharing program with elders, Abba Gada, experts and church leader to have current existing things in the community. Trainers were only teaching according to module guidelines rather than adding teachers personal experiences. So, according to this study results the teaching delivery in the study is DE-contextualized.

- Regarding to materials preparation, trainers were trying to apply TALULAR (Teaching and Learning Using Local Resources) principle to produce learning materials but still there is no consideration to inculcate local experience, locally known materials in instructional materials preparation. The produced materials does not indicate what is really found in local community. Even if trainers were respecting diversity, there is no application in materials production. Trainers were translating learning materials to local language but they were not producing accordingly. Thus, materials production in study area were DE-contextualized according to the results of this study.
- Based on the result obtained from respondents, the major challenges of trainers in implementing contextualized teaching strategies were the following. Unavailability of qualified expert in the field of early childhood education, lack of support from concerned bodies, lack of technical skill among trainers, unavailability of workshop room, shortage experience sharing programs, newness of the program, lack of trainers motivation and irrelevant training program.

Based the above the following recommendations were made

- Recommendation for Oromia education bureau should be they have to hire qualified and competent early childhood and materials production experts. They should have to give additional incentives for trainers to motivate them. They should create means of experience sharing among college trainers and internship opportunity to observe model pre-primary schools.
- Recommendation for Adola College teachers should be they have to facilitate professional field visit opportunities for trainers, consult local elders, Abba Gada, and church leaders for experience sharing, seminars, workshop, and training about materials production. They should have to create means of discussion and report system about contextualization. In addition, this, the college should try to open model early childhood school to teach early childhood teachers more practically.
- Recommendations for trainers should be they have learned more about local community to link their teaching with experiences of early childhood teachers. They should have to recognize the resources to contextualize both learning materials and teaching practices. They should have to learn about the program via social media to have relevant information.

Reference

Reference

- Abraha, A., & Mendisu, B. S. (2022). Quality of Pre-School Teacher Education in Ethiopia and its Implication for Quality Learning Outcomes. *Nordic Journal of Comparative and International Education (NJCIE)*, 6(1).
- Anyanwu, S. U., & Iwuamadi, F. N. (2015). Student-centered teaching and learning in higher education: Transition from theory to practice in Nigeria. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 3(8), 349-358.

- Camic, P. M., Long, D. L., Panter, A. T., Rindskopf, D. E., & Sher, K. J. (2012). *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol 2: Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological* (pp. x-701). American Psychological Association.
- Creswell. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approach*.

