EDUVELOP

JOURNAL OF ENGLISH EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

OPEN ACCESS: Research Article

Teachers' perspectives on their roles in EFL curriculum development: Wollo and Samara Universities of Ethiopia in focus

[1]Abdusomed Sualih Yimer

[1]Samara University, Ethiopia
[1]Email Correspondence : abdusomedsualih2012@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aimed to investigate teachers' perspectives on their roles in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum development in two Ethiopian universities, Wollo and Samara. The study was descriptive in design accompanied by mixed research approach. Participants of the study were EFL teachers of the two universities ($n_{-}32$). The study employed parallel mixed sampling technique merging census and purposive sampling techniques concurrently. Data were gathered via questionnaires and interviews. The data were analyzed using convergent parallel data analysis method. Findings of the study revealed that majority of the teachers had active roles in curriculum implementation though they had very restricted involvement in curriculum designing. Some teachers had moderately limited involvement in curriculum evaluation and improvement. Majority of the teachers also had negative perspectives on their roles in curriculum development process. Behind teachers' negative perspectives, problems like less inclusiveness of curriculum development, little worth for teachers' voice in curriculum development, predominance of top-down curriculum development approach, inequitable opportunities for curriculum development programs as well as inadequate budget and time for curriculum development were identified.

Teachers' negative perspectives on their roles in curriculum development process in turn imparted undesirable impediments on teaching practices. Correspondingly, recommendations like necessities of teachers' adequate involvement in curriculum development, equitable criteria for selecting participants in curriculum development, practical concerns for teachers' credible ideas in curriculum development, replacing top-down curriculum development approach with its bottom-up counterpart and sustenance of teachers' motivations to enhance EFL curriculum were forwarded.

Keywords: *Teachers' perspectives, EFL curriculum development roles, Universities*

1. Introduction

In the contemporary world of globalization, English language is highly valued for its global communication roles in socio-cultural, economic and political issues. For this reason, many English non-native countries incorporate English as foreign language in their educational curricula. In this regard, AL-Ghazo (2015) stated that English is one of the basic courses in curricula of schools as well as universities of many countries. Correspondingly, Berhane and Mishra (2019) stated that English had been offered as a compulsory foreign language course starting from primary schools to universities along with its role as medium of instruction in secondary schools and universities of Ethiopian from 1941 onwards.

The Ethiopian ministry of education as cited in Dereje (2012) confirmed that attaining quality education is a major determination of educational policies and language curricula of Ethiopia. Relating to this, Mesfin (2016) furthered that one focus of the educational strategy to realize the desired quality of education is enhancing educational curriculum. In other words, effective curriculum development is essential input for good quality of education.

Curriculum development encompasses all events in curriculum planning, implementation and evaluation (Mesfin, 2016). Hence, it necessitates cooperative efforts of all educational stakeholders among whom teachers are immediate implementers. Oliver & Hyun (2011) confirmed this stating that shared responsibility among educational stakeholders is a strong foundation for effective curriculum. Thus, if teachers, the executing practitioners, are restricted to be involved in curriculum development, it will be challenging to effectively implement in classrooms, and this

in turn will defy quality of EFL education for the fear that teachers' restricted roles in curriculum development can generate negative perspectives. Chandran (1998) confirmed this asserting that the way individuals approach situation with positive or negative perspectives depends upon whether or not there is self-involvement, and whether such involvement enhances or threatens the individual. Furthermore, Trevithick (2012) asserted that perspective of any practitioners is influenced by policies of the contemporary government. Thus, curriculum development, as an essential element of government policy, has undeniable influences on teachers' teaching practices.

2. Literature

Scholars such as Amlaku (2010), Jha (2014) and Mesfin (2016) stated in common that the limitations in quality of Ethiopian EFL education, in one way or another, were rooted in the country's educational curriculum development system that needs to be solved through researches. Henceforth, the researcher of this study decided to investigate the perspectives of teachers on their roles in EFL curriculum development considering the direct and implied recommendations of the above mentioned scholars as well as his practical observations. The researcher attempted to look for previous native studies about the perspectives of teachers on their roles in EFL curriculum development in Ethiopia, and he founded studies of Asrat (2020), Badgering (2014) and Tefera and Wudu (2016). However, all of these three studies were not specifically conducted on EFL curriculum; they did not deal with issues related to teachers' perspectives and each of them included very specific components of curriculum development process as compared with the current study. Moreover, two of them were conducted in primary and secondary schools.

This study; therefore, investigated teachers' perspectives on their roles in EFL curriculum development in the contexts of Ethiopian higher education. The specific objectives of the study were identifying teachers' roles in curriculum development, exploring teachers' perspectives on their roles in curriculum development and examining reflections of teachers' perspectives on their roles in curriculum development in their teaching practices. Due to the contemporary confrontation of

corona pandemic, the study was restricted in the two Ethiopian second-generation universities in 2020.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design and Approach

Keeping the main research design descriptive, the study employed a convergent parallel mixed research approach. As Creswell (2014) stated convergent parallel mixed methods design is a research design wherein quantitative and qualitative methods are researchers merged in a single study to achieve comprehensive investigation.

3.2 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

Parallel mixed method sampling, which, according to Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) allows simultaneous use of probability and nonprobability sampling techniques in a single sturdy was employed. Therefore, census (representative of probability sampling) and purposive sampling technique were applied with the intent to realize triangulating of quantitative and qualitative data bases. Census was employed since the number of participants of the study was manageable. For the qualitative aspect of the study, purposive sampling was used to select interviewees whose exhaustive insights were needed. Regarding sample sizes, since census was employed for quantitative facet, all the 32 participants were included. For the qualitative aspect, six participants were purposefully selected from both Universities based on academic qualifications, teaching experiences and administrative positions.

3.3 Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were EFL teachers who were in formal regular duty as permanent governmental employees of Samara and Wollo Universities in 2020. They were 32 in number 18 of whom were from Wollo University while the remaining 14 were for Samara University.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

Considering advantages of qualitative and quantitative data for triangulation, questionnaires and interviews were used as data gathering tools. The questionnaires were prepared in line with the research questions including both closed-ended and open-ended items to gather quantitative and qualitative data respectively. The researcher employed experts' validation review and test retest to ascertain the validity and reliability of the questionnaires. Semi-structured interview was used for detailed insights of participants to back up data collected through questionnaires.

3.5 Procedures of Data Collection

In order to gather the data, the researcher followed successive procedures. First of all, letters of willingness were addressed to each concerned authorities and study participants through emails and telegrams. Fortunately, all participants agreed to deliver the required data. Then, questionnaires were distributed through the aforementioned online channels and recorded telephone interviews were concurrently conducted. Finally, the filled out questionnaires and interview transcriptions were properly coded, labeled and compiled.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

Since the research paradigm and research approach of the study were pragmatism and mixed respectively, convergent parallel data analysis method by which quantitative and qualitative data were concurrently analyzed was found apt. Creswell (2009) inspired that convergent parallel data analysis method helps to achieve effective data triangulation.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Throughout the research, all exhibitions of untrustworthiness were attempted to be evaded. In relation to study participants, ethical aspects like informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, non-maleficence and honesty were carefully conducted. To this end, willingness of each participant was gained prior to data collection, and they were made aware of the purposes of the study. All necessary cautions and guarantees were made to protect participants from any type of

physical and/or psychological threat or harm. For instance, the researcher did not ask embarrassing questions which disguised any respondent. Furthermore, the participants' names were kept anonymous. Besides, no personal identification markers were used to identify participants' responses in both questionnaires and interview transcriptions.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Teachers' Roles in EFL Curriculum Development Phases

Figures 1 below demonstrates the questionnaire data regarding status of teachers' involvement in the five curriculum development phases. Accordingly, out of the total participants, the majority (84.4%) had active roles in curriculum implementation followed by curriculum evaluation in which 31.3% of participants had active participation. On the contrary, the least percentage (9.4%) of participants had roles in curriculum designing preceded by curriculum changing wherein 16.6% of them had active roles. The remaining 28.1% of participants had active involvement in curriculum improvement. Concisely, levels of teachers' involvement in the five curriculum development phases from the most restricted to least restricted were ordered as curriculum designing, change, improvement, evaluation and implementation.

Teachers who participated in curriculum designing and change specified, in open-ended items and interviews, that they contributed for selecting and sequencing contents, setting objectives, preparing schedules, deciding names and types of courses as well as choosing appropriate teaching approaches. However, they remarked that their number was not representative enough and most of their suggestions were not practically incorporated in the curriculum.

To recapitulate, the findings unveiled that many of the curriculum development phases lacked inclusiveness which is crucial feature of effective curriculum development process since teachers as central members of educational stakeholders were not adequately involved. This is against what Ornstein and Hunkins (2004) credited that the participation of teachers in every phase of curriculum is not only necessary but also mandatory. Likewise, Rimal (2018) treasured that contributions

of all teachers' in curriculum development process is indispensable prerequisite to addresses purposes of educational institutions.
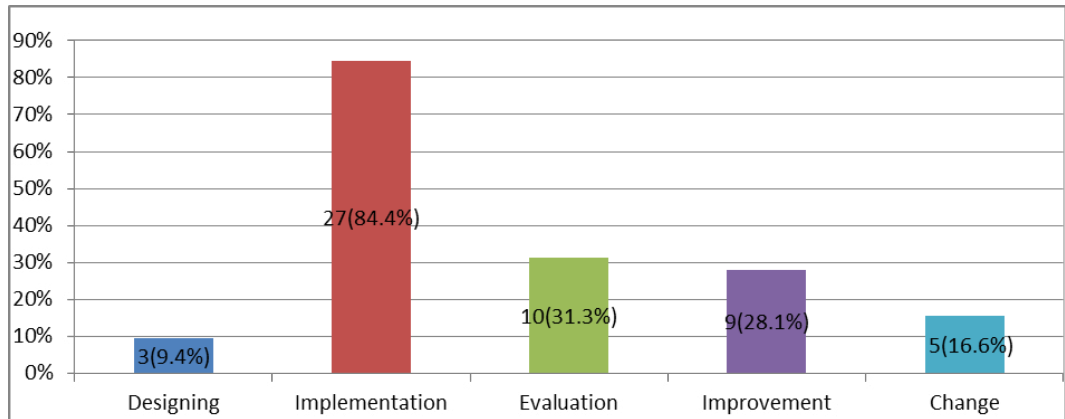

Figure 1. Levels of Teachers' involvement in Curriculum Development Phases

4.2 Teachers' Perspectives on Their Roles in EFL Curriculum Development

Table 1 below portrays teachers' perspectives on their roles in EFL curriculum development. For ease of analyses, the values of two negative measures (strongly disagree and disagree) as well as the two positive measures (strongly agree and agree) are summed up while neutral values are separately analyzed. In view of that, 47% of participants were displeased because of their inactive involvement in curriculum designing while 40.5% of them were pleased. As to freedom in curriculum implementation, 34.5% of participants were dissatisfied while 44% of them were satisfied. For all items in table 1, relatively few numbers of participants were neutral. This, as it was justified in open-ended questionnaires items and interviews, was for they had rare involvements in few curriculum related scenes wherein they contributed some valuable insights though many of their suggestions were not properly considered. Participants with neutral stand also justified that they had never participated in most of curriculum development phases.

Diminishment of teachers' admitted ownership of EFL curriculum due to their restricted involvement in curriculum development was confirmed by 38% of participants while the ownership of the remaining 44% of teachers' was not. Those whose ownership was not diminished justified that they accepted the curriculum admittedly for their freedom in curriculum implementation and occasional involvements in some curriculum designing programs. Those with diminished ownership of the curriculum warranted that their restricted roles in curriculum development and disregards to their curriculum evaluation remarks were reasons behind. This upholds what Taylor (2004) stated that cooperation among educational stakeholders in curriculum development is necessary to increase equal ownership of the whole educational.

Table 1. Teachers' Perspectives on Their Roles in EFL Curriculum Development
Key: f: frequency   %: percentage

		Measures								
Questionnaire Items		**Strongly Disagree**		**Disagree**		**Neutral**		**Agree**		**Strongly Agree**
No	Content	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	I am pleased for I have had active involvement in the process of EFL curriculum designing.	10	31	5	16	5	16	4	12.5	9	28
2	The freedom I have had in EFL curriculum implementation satisfied me.	4	12.5	7	22	6	19	6	19	8	25
3	Practicality of my EFL curriculum evaluation remarks for actual curricular improvement made me enthusiastic.	5	16	6	19	7	22	9	28	4	12.5
4	My involvement in EFL curriculum development process increased my admitted ownership of the curriculum.	6	19	6	19	6	19	8	25	6	19

Moreover, as it is depicted in figure 2 below, majority (41%) of participants had negative feelings towards their overall roles in curriculum development process. In

contrast, 18.8% and 21.8% of them had positive and moderate feeling respectively. The remaining 19% preferred to be neutral for their recentness to teaching as profession.

Open-ended items and interview revealed that the reasons behind teachers' negative feelings towards their roles in curriculum development were: less inclusiveness of curriculum development, predominance of top-down designing approach, lack of formal and regular curriculum development programs, little worth for teachers' voice in curriculum development, excessive autonomy of central government agents in curriculum development, imposition of new curriculum without prior consultancy, imbalanced dissemination of opportunities in curriculum development practices and inadequate budget and time for curriculum development.
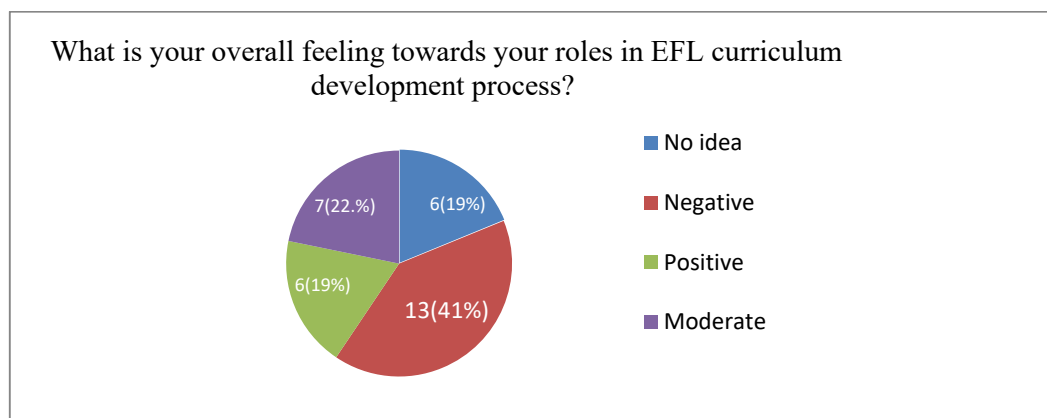

Figure 2. Teachers' overall Feelings towards Their Roles in EFL Curriculum Development

4.3 Implications of Teachers' Perspectives on their roles in Teaching Practices

Summing up the values of two negative measures (strongly disagree and disagree) as well as the two positive measures (strongly agree and agree) data in table 2 below indicates that 37.5% of participants were inspired to teach optimistically due to their feeling towards their involvement in curriculum designing while the majority (43.8%) were not inspired.

More than half (59.4%) teachers were encouraged to teach autonomously for the freedom in curriculum implementation though 8(25%) of them disagreed for they were offended by the imposition of centrally designed curriculum with restricted students' assessment criteria.

It was indicated by 46.9% of participants had the trust on their curriculum evaluation remarks to be input for curriculum improvement which in turn upraised their teaching commitment. However, 40.6% were disappointed by ignorance of their curriculum evaluation remarks as a result of which their teaching commitment was let down. As revealed from corresponding open-ended items, limited number participants decided to be neutral in all items due to their indifference to decide for their recent in teaching experience.

As it was summarized from open-ended items, the participants with positive and moderate feelings towards their roles in EFL curriculum development stated that they were motivated to teach with passion. In contrast, those who had negative feelings stated that their feelings imparted undesirable consequences such as lack of interest to teach some courses, diminished sense of ownership to EFL curriculum, and difficulties to properly implement the curriculum.

To recap, teachers who had active involvement in curriculum development were more inspired to teach than teachers who had not. These findings support propositions of Yanisko (2016) which affirmed that teachers' tend to deliver higher quality teaching when they have positive perceptions, and they tend to give lower quality instruction they when have negative perceptions. Similarly, Carl (2002) proposed that adequately involved teachers in curriculum development process are more empowered to teach successfully than uninvolved teachers.

Table 2. Implications of Teachers' Perspectives on their roles in Practices of Teaching

| Questionnaire Items | | Scales | | | | | | | | |
| | | Strongly Disagree | | Disagree | | Neutral | | Agree | | Strongly Agree | |
No	Content	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	My feeling towards my active participation in curriculum designing has inspired me to teach optimistically.	5	15.6	7	21.9	7	21.9	6	18.8	8	25
2	My freedom to implement EFL curricular contents encouraged me to teach autonomously.	4	12.5	4	12.5	6	18.8	12	37.5	7	21.9
3	The trust I have on my curriculum evaluation remarks to be input for curriculum improvement upraised my teaching commitment.	4	12.5	9	28.1	4	12.5	11	34.4.	4	12.5

5. Conclusion

Summing up the aforementioned findings and discussions the study brought about the following conclusions in three paragraphs consistent with the sequences of specific objectives.

As regards teachers' roles in EFL curriculum development process, all teachers were found active participants in curriculum implementation as per their specializations, and many of them had freedom to implement the curriculum except some indirect restrictions to follow predetermined contents and assessment procedures. Many of the teachers; however, had extremely limited involvement in curriculum designing and changing. Some teachers had moderately limited involvement in curriculum evaluation and improvement though most of their credible suggestions were practically disregarded by concerned bodies. The findings also unveiled that there were hindrances for teachers' active involvement in curriculum development process such as less participatory features of the curriculum development, little worth given for teachers' voice in curriculum development by

concerned agents, predominance of top-down curriculum development approach that gave excessive autonomy for higher officials, non-academic and inequitable dissemination of opportunities in formal curriculum development programs, lack of formal pathways for teachers to comment curriculum development issues as well as inadequate budget and time allocation for EFL curriculum development.

As to teachers' perspectives on their practical roles in EFL curriculum development process, majority of the teachers had been found with negative feelings towards their roles in curriculum development process in aggregates though there were some teachers with positive, moderate and neutral felling specifically. This indicated that there were some partially satisfied teachers who had rare and nominal involvements in some curriculum development programs, a few satisfied teachers who had relatively better participations in some curriculum development programs and few neutral participants for their recentness to EFL teaching in the study areas.

In terms of the implications of teachers' perceptions on their teaching practices, it was found that the negative perspectives stemmed out of teachers' inactive involvement or noninvolvement in EFL curriculum development process imparted some undesirable impediments such as difficulties to effectively implement the curriculum, hesitations to admittedly accept the curriculum, lack of interest to teach some courses and doubts about the overall future of their professional roles in curriculum development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were forwarded for future improvements in EFL curriculum development process.

- All teachers should be involved in all phases of EFL curriculum development programs for it enhances effective implementation. When it is unfeasible to include all teachers, adequate representatives of teachers should be selected based on agreed upon, logical and equitable criteria.

- Teachers' constructive commentaries in curriculum development programs should be practically considered since ignorance of their suggestions weakened their admitted ownership of the curriculum.

- The accustomed top-down curriculum development approach should be replaced with its bottom-up counterpart so that all educational stakeholders will be involved.

- EFL curriculum development should be as purely academic, inclusive and merit based as possible.

- Formal and regular pathways should be prepared for teachers to comment curriculum development issues.

- As full-fledged owners of their profession, teachers should sustain their intrinsic motivation for the betterment of EFL curriculum development.

- Future researchers are invited to study the roles of other educational stakeholders in the EFL curriculum development in Ethiopia for the area ha not been well studied yet.

References

AL-Ghazo, A. (2015). *Vertical Integration of Grammatical Concepts According to the Spiral Curriculum Design*. Ajloun: Ajloun National University press

AL-Houssawi, H.M. (2016). *EFL Teachers' Views about Their Roles in the Curriculum of the EFL Foundation Year Programme in Saudi Arabia* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Exeter, England). Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net./10871/22325.alhousawiH.pdf

Amlaku, E. (2013). *Language Policies and the Role of English in Ethiopia*. Conference Paper, · December 2013. KHAABBA International Training and Language Services. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259267200

Asrat Dagnew. (2020). Teachers' Role in Curriculum Implementation at Primary and Secondary Schools of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. *Contemporary Educational Researches Journal*. 10(2), 28-41. DOI: 10.18844/cerj.v%vi%i.4660.

Berhane Gerencheal & Mishra, D. (2019). Foreign Languages in Ethiopia: History and current status. *IJRAR,* 6(1), 1431-1439.

Biadgelign Ademe. (2014). Teacher Involvement in Curriculum Material Evaluation: A Qualitative Case Study in Secondary Schools of Ethiopia. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa university press

Carl, A.E. (2002). Teacher empowerment through curriculum development: theory into practice. Cape Town: Juta.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, And Mixed Methods Approaches (4th ed.)*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Creswell, J.W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches (3rd ed.)*. London: SAGE Publications Inc.

Cuérel, M., Loots, E. & Lavanga, M. (2019). Not from, but in, the Same Organization: Cooperation. *Journal of Creativity and Business*, 5, 2351 – 6186.

Dereje, N. (2012). *Primary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teaching in Ethiopia: Policy and Practice* (Doctoral Dissertation). Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press.

Jha, S. K. (2014). Are ELT-Practitioners Products of Ideal ELT Courses? (The Case of Eight Ethiopian Universities). *Global Journal of interdisciplinary social sciences,* 3(3):238-247.

Lasky, S. (2005). A sociocultural approach to understanding teacher identity, agency and professional vulnerability in a context of secondary school reform. Teaching and teacher education, 21(8), 899-916.

Onyeachu, J. (2008). Curriculum implementation at the primary education level: Challenges for the 21st century. Multidisciplinary Journal of Research Development, 10(1), 38-49.

Orstein ,A. and Hunkins F.(2004).*Curriculum: Foundations, Principles, and Issues*. New York: PEARSON publication.

Rimal, K. (2018). Teacher: An Important but Less Recognized Actor of School Curriculum Development in Nepal. *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 12, 66-71.

Snow, C. (2015). Organizing in the Age of Competition, Cooperation, and Collaboration. *Journal of leadership and organizational studies,* 22(4), 433-442.

Tadesse, T., & Melese, W. (2016). The Prevailing Practices and Challenges of Curriculum Reform in Ethiopian Higher Education: Views and Responses from Within. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 41(10). DOI: 10.14221/ajte.2016v41n10.6

Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2009). *The Foundations of Mixed Methods Research: Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Techniques in the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Taylor, P. (2004). *How can participatory processes of curriculum development impact on the quality of teaching and learning in developing countries?* UK: Institute of Development Studies.

Trevithick, P. (2012). *Practice Perspectives. In Practice Perspectives. Gray, M., Midgley, J. and Webb, S. A. and Sub Editorial Team (eds) The Sage Handbook of Social Work*. London: Sage DOI:https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446247648

Yanisko, E. J. (2016). Negotiating perceptions of tracked students: Novice teachers facilitating high-quality mathematics instruction. *Journal of Urban Mathematics Education*, 9(2), 153-184. (Accession no. EJ1124960)