PRE-SERVICE PRACTICUM AT A TEACHER EDUCATION COLLEGE: A CASE IN ETHIOPIA

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The title of the thesis: <u>PRE-SERVICE PRACTICUM AT A TEACHER EDUCATION COLLEGE: A CASE IN ETHIOPIA</u>

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10 MAY 2023

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents.

My father, Bekele Ageye and my mother Adanech Deboch, are the inspirations for this level of education. Early in my life, they voiced their hopes for me, instilling in me a desire to go further in education than they did and further than anyone in my family. It was from them that I learned I was capable of doing anything I set my mind to, and that I would come out on top every time.

ABSTRACT

This study explored how the basic ideas of the constructivist theory of learning are put into practice in the pre-service practicum programme to determine the extent to which key participants hold a shared set of beliefs about the pre-service practicum and to explore its implementation at the Hossana College of Teacher Education, Ethiopia, in light of the constructivist paradigm. A single qualitative case (holistic) design was used to fully grasp the phenomenon under inquiry from the standpoint of the research participants. This qualitative single-case study was guided by the constructivist theory of learning based on constructivist interpretivism's philosophical paradigms. This research was also based on the Vygotskian epistemological idea that social reality is formed and mediated because contact and engagement do not exist without participants. Twenty-nine individuals were purposively sampled, all of whom were well-informed. Interviews, observations, document reviews, and field studies were also used to collect relevant and sufficient data for the study. The qualitative data underwent interpretive and reflective analyses. The study's findings revealed that, despite the inherent constraints of the practicum implementation process, the practicum is critical to developing competent professionals. However, it appears that the essence of the practicum is not well understood in light of the constructivist teacher education framework. Thus, participants' ideas regarding the fundamental assumptions and theoretical underpinnings of constructivist pedagogy were contradictory to the beliefs of the constructivist theory of learning. The programme was being run in an environment that did not support the ways in which to achieve the end goal. An integrated and dependable partnership or collaboration among the involved parties had not yet been established. The roles and responsibilities were not properly shared by all the concerned bodies. It seemed that a kind of compliance dominated the scene of the practicum rather than collaboration. Tasks in practicum courses were not clear and well-organised in the practicum setting, and college supervisors and cooperating teachers continued to play traditional roles. The entire learning environment is less supportive of the practicum's premises. Based on theory, policy, and practice, this study came to a conclusion on the proposed framework for pre-service practicum implementation.

KEY-TERMS: consistency, learning to teach, mentor, organisation, practicum experience, pre-service practicum, reflectivity, student-teachers, supervisor, and the triad.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ESDP	Education Sector Development Programme
ETP	Education and training Policy
HDP	Higher Diploma Programme
MOE	The Ministry of Education
PGDT	Postgraduate Diploma in Education Programme
REB	Regional Education Bureau
STs	Student Teachers
TEIs	Teacher Education Institutions
TESO	Teacher Education System Overhaul
TTI	Teachers' Training Institute
ZPD	Zone of Proximal development

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CHAPTER ONE
ORIENTATION

1.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the study provides an overview of the research. It comprises an introduction, personal involvement, the purpose of why this research has been selected, the motivation, and the importance of the studies that were followed by the background (context of the study), theoretical insights that guided the study. The problem statement, research questions and aims and objectives are presented. The chapter also give a brief outline of the methodology followed, trustworthiness measures and ethical considerations. Key concepts are clarified and the chapter comes to a close with the outline of chapters and a summary of the chapter.

Education is a crucial component of societal development since it enhances the human condition by fostering more intelligence, improving health and living standards, greater social justice, and higher levels of productivity (Spiel et al., 2018). It is a deliberate endeavour that can take place in many settings besides traditional classrooms. It is important to note that the goal of this deliberate action is not limited to the dissemination of factual information but it also encompasses the transfer of norms, practices, abilities and sensibilities. Knowledge, understanding, value, growth, care and behaviour can all be helped by education, which can happen in many different places (Chazan, 2022:13-21).

Education is also thought to play a number of important roles in a country's social, economic and cultural development. It is important to make sure that education is linked to the changing nature of society and that it continues to help achieve educational and social goals. According to the policies published by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education, "education is a process through which a man communicates his experiences, new insights, and ideas gained over time in his desire to survive and grow across generations" (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1994:1).

Starting with elementary school, one of the goals of education at all levels is to help people and society become better at solving problems. Therefore, education as a process of self-realisation making explicit what is implicit in us. In other words, education means bringing out inborn abilities and potential in children and allowing them to become what they are capable of becoming (Matheson, 2014:15-32).

Therefore, helping children to achieve their maximum potential is possible through teacher training programmes from which the individuals acquire the desired teaching skills. In this regard, Darling-Hammond (2006b:300-314) pointed out that there can be no effective educational system without adequate teacher education, particularly as teacher education is at the heart of any modern educational system and that a country without an effective teacher programme, will result in education being doomed.

Moreover, the teacher education programme is critical for enhancing teachers' abilities to engage in effective and productive learning and teaching processes in the classroom. It is challenging to guarantee educational quality without academically qualified and professionally responsible teachers. Tadesse and Meaza (2007:63-71) support this view by stating that for teachers to fulfil their tasks, academically proficient, professionally trained and ethically committed teachers must be produced by a well-designed and effectively conducted teacher training programme. This means that programmes that train people to become teachers should teach them how to combine theory and practice in a rigorous way (Wikstrom, Patterson & Zeek, 2006:22–31).

According to Ogunyinka, Okeke, and Adedoyin (2015:111), when we talk about teacher education, we are talking about the techniques and policies put in place to make sure that trainee teachers have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the classroom and in the larger community. They claim that the three stages of initial teacher education, induction, and continuing professional development (CPD) are typical divisions of teacher education programmes. This means that when we talk about beginning teacher education, we are talking about a pre-service course that must be finished before someone can start teaching in a classroom with full

responsibility. When a new teacher is inducted, it means that they receive training and support during their initial teaching years or their first year at a particular school. Finally, teacher development, also known as ongoing professional development (CPD), is the final stage in the majority of teacher training programmes. Teachers go through this process while also doing their jobs.

The training programs mentioned above must provide students and current teachers with the necessary abilities, such as an understanding of academically sound and professionally relevant assessment methods as well as school curricula, educational theories, practicum activities, and assessments. An effective management strategy, in-depth expertise in teaching specific subjects using digital skills and technology, learner-centred instruction that is activity-based (participatory learning experiences, play, projects, dialogue, observation, visits, and so forth), the capacity to integrate academic learning with productive work, interpersonal reflection, and research skills for cooperative work in the classroom are all requirements for ensuring that a teacher is well-trained. These are some prerequisites for teachers, both current and future (Francesca, 2014:2-3).

The above curriculum structure is also the current trend in Ethiopian teacher training. In the same way, both Ingersoll and Smith agree that future teachers should do the following exercise. For example,

> … field observations involve watching and participating in a classroom setting while being supervised by the classroom teacher, student teaching involves several weeks of instruction in a designated classroom while being directed by the classroom teacher and another supervisor (for example, from the college) and internship involves a teaching candidate being supervised in their classroom (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004:29).

As a result, in terms of teacher education, the student teaching/practicum experience is an essential component of the programme (Darling-Hammond, 2006:300-314; Ferrier-Kerr, 2009:790-797; Tang, 2003; Zeichner, 1990:105-132). It provides student-teachers with the opportunity to deal with various challenging teaching

situations. It is also regarded as one of the most beneficial and challenging teacher education experiences (Frier-Kerr, 2009:790–797; Koksal and Genc, 2019; Koross, 2016). Koerner, Rust and Baumgartner (2002:35–38) claim that student teaching and early teaching experiences have a significant impact on the development of teachers' beliefs and their practices.

Given the foregoing, it is reasonable to conclude that teacher education in Ethiopia has only existed for a little more than half a century and that during that time it has encountered a number of obstacles. According to the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2003), there is no coherent vision for teacher education, and neither teachers nor educational administrators are hired or promoted based on their interests and professional talents. Pre-service general education classes, a methods class, and student teaching have all been staples of the Ethiopian teacher education curriculum for decades (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, in Amare, 2006:108). An essential tenet of this framework is that becoming an effective teacher necessitates not just gaining expertise in the subject matter but also mastering a method of conveying that expertise to students (Kennedy, 1993, in Amare, 2006:108). Hence, Ethiopia's education system has been revised, looked into, and looked at again and again over the years to help the country address its long-term problems of poverty, backwardness and underdevelopment.

In an attempt to redress this situation, the government of Ethiopia called for a complete overhaul of the teacher education system (Fekede & Gemechese, 2009:113; MOE, 2003). The Teacher Education System Overhaul (Mekonnen, 2008) has identified problems with how teachers are trained in terms of their foundational and subject-area knowledge and the quality of their practical training. Guided by TESO, the Ethiopian government is dedicated to ensuring that the teaching practicum is an integral element of the teacher education programme as a means for cultivating an educated workforce of reflective teachers (MOE, 2011:1). Hence, since the 2003-2004 school years, the teaching practicum has been a requirement in almost all teacher-training colleges in Ethiopia.

What was the motivation for this study? For the last decade at the research site, I have taught pedagogical science and subject methodology courses to student teachers and supervised and coordinated practicum and school linkage programmes. In addition, I was a coordinator of the practicum and school linkage programmes for the Hossana College of Teacher Education from 2013 to 2018. During this time, I observed and experienced a variety of problems and received complaints from those involved in implementing the programme. Therefore, I felt that research on the research site's current practices for practicum programmes was vital.

This study therefore, aims to assess and comprehend the participants' perceptions of the practicum's relevance and implementation. It is particularly significant that it

- evaluates the practicum's relevance and makes recommendations for programme improvement;
- raises awareness of the practicum programme's success and challenges among stakeholders;
- informs teacher educators, administrators, practicum coordinators, placement teachers and other interested parties about possible ways to improve the programme's implementation and convince them to take action to find solutions for the problems.

In addition, the goal of the study is to serve as a springboard for more research. Since practicums are a new part of our teacher education system, this research study is unique in how it was done and in what it found.

1.2   THE RESEARCH BACKGROUND

As seen from the discussion above, one can understand the essence of teacher education in general and the usefulness of practicum activities in particular in the general education system. This section gives the background to the research: the experiences I had during my teaching practicum.

Programmes for teacher education incorporate several elements. Among the major categories are subject-specific, general education courses (psychology, philosophy of education, assessment, and so forth), applications of pedagogy and professional ethics (Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005:293). According to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2008:29), a teacher-to-be should take classes that give them "a broad liberal arts education," "an in-depth study of the subject" they will teach, "a foundation of professional and pedagogical knowledge," and "experience in field schools".

In line with TESO, a government-initiated reform designed to realise the aims of Ethiopia's education and training policy, a framework detailing a strategy to address the problems in Ethiopia's education system and enhance teacher preparation quality was developed (MOE, 2003: 6). Guided by TESO, significant structural changes have been made in teacher education programmes. One such change is incorporating the teaching practicum as an essential component of the teacher education curriculum as a means of cultivating an educated workforce of reflective teachers (MOE, 2003:2). The paradigm shift in the pre-service practicum teacher education programme requires learning opportunities based on a constructivist paradigm.

The teaching practicum, as the heart of the teacher education programme, is a strategy that exposes student teachers to real school environments and experiences (Amare, 2006:108). The practicum offers student teachers the opportunity to observe and appreciate the complexity of school organisations, academic practices, assessment, curriculum applications, and the social relations of education (Eti & Karaduman, 2020; MoNE, 2017).This observation requires guidance, as do these initial steps into the classroom as an educator. During the practicum, student teachers enter a living laboratory, guided by a collaborative team of cooperating teachers and college supervisors. The practicum, which gives student teachers a framework and educational scaffolding that helps them show that they are good at their academic subjects and builds good educational relationships, allows them to put the teaching and discipline knowledge gained in college into practice (Adu-Yeboah & Yaw Kwaah, 2018).

The TESO programme focuses mostly on an extended practicum experience where the duration of the practicum has been increased. Components of the practicum related to students' developmental progress have also been increased. The most important change was that it was given more time and had to be done along with the theoretical courses from the beginning of the programme. This was done to give student teachers a chance to think about what they had learned and try out different methods and practices on their own (MOE, 2003:12). It is thus important that theoretical courses and practicum experiences in schools work together (Allsopp, DeMarie, Alvarez-McHatton & Doone, 2006:19-35; Seferolu, 2006:369-378). In the same way, Beck and Kosnik (2002:83) suggest that combining the practicum and method courses was a "critical enquiring approach" which could include action research, a reflective approach and a strong partnership between teacher education institutions and schools. In addition, the approach is active learning, student-centred instruction, cooperative learning and continuous assessment.

Thus, the approach to the teaching practicum has shifted from the process of imitating old, traditional, and conservative notions and skills to a method of investigation. This shift from the conventional approach of teaching practice to the current practicum entails working with "mentors" not just a physical shift but a reconceptualisation (Fish, 1989). Many scholars (Darling-Hammond, 2006b; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Fish, 1995; Fosnot, 1996; Gordon, 2009; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999) advocate for such an approach in pre-service practicum programmes aligning it with a constructivist perspective. Since the 1980s, most Western countries, to improve the quality of teacher education, have included recommended changes in standards, most notably from a constructivist framework (Van Huizen, Van Oers & Wubbels, 2005). Their reform efforts encourage students' deeper grasp of concepts and the connections between ideas rather than the memorisation of isolated material. Assumptions about knowledge, learning and teaching must be made. The teaching practicum is linked to the rise of constructivism as a philosophy, similar to Schön's (1983, 1987) works on the 'reflective practitioner'. Schön's view of professional learning is that theory and practice are not separated but that 'theorising' (active processing of the outcomes of situated learning) is a part of the

practice. In this context, student teachers construct their principles of theories based on immediate experiences that are subsequently examined to see how they fit with what is already known or believed. The kind of intuitive professional 'know-how' that Schön (1983; 1987) alludes to is something that student teachers will only learn after critically assessing and comprehending their classroom experiences. These ideas, which are now used to guide many modern teacher education programmes, were first made in response to the apprentice model of teacher education and follows the reflective method. TESO favours a reflective practitioner approach and recommends the employment of strategies like portfolio compilation as part of the student teachers' development as reflective practitioners in the practicum programme.

The practicum programme is a crucial aspect of the teacher training programme being regarded as a necessary component of teacher education, among all of these other elements. It has an effect on the development of pedagogical abilities and subject knowledge among student-teachers, critically changing student teacher perceptions (Grootenboer, 2006:18-32). Pre-service teacher education conducted in the classrooms of teacher education institutions is not adequate without practicums at field schools. Both types of education offer pre-service teachers the chance to put their newly learned information into practice and reflect on their performance (Mazo, 2015:296-304).

The opportunity to "use and reflect on their subject, professional, and pedagogical knowledge, abilities, and professional dispositions in a range of situations" is provided by practicum experiences for future teachers (NCATE, 2008:29). Practicums, according to Armutcu and Yaman (2010:32), give pre-service teachers "actual classroom" experience and help them learn how to interact with students and other teachers. Practicum experiences may help future teachers revise their past knowledge, views, and beliefs about teaching and learning after an adaptation or absorption process of new experiences in the real environment.

As long as sufficient resources and time are devoted to the programme, the practicum remains one of the most popular pedagogical practices in pre-service teacher preparation (Cohen, Hoz & Kaplan, 2013). The practicum gives student

teachers the real-world experience they need to put the educational ideas they have learned in school to use (Gray, Wright & Pascoe, 2017; Lawson, Çakmak, Gündüz & Busher, 2015; Lomi & Mbato, 2020). The micro-skills of teaching, such as classroom management, preparing materials and media, delivering a lesson and evaluating students, are also taught to student teachers during the practicum. Student teachers can also learn about how to run a school from the principals of the schools, the teachers who oversee them, or other practicing students. In addition, the pre-service practicum programme includes lesson planning, interacting with cooperative teachers, supervisors, and students, continuous assessment, reflection on previous experiences, an extended practicum and portfolio-making.

However, various researchers have discovered that multiple factors influence the successful implementation of the practicum programme. Some of these include pre-service teachers' assistance and "friendliness or support from the mentor teacher" during their practicum (Beck & Kosnik, 2002:86), as well as the nature and extent of supervision, the level of professional assistance provided by mentors and the type of feedback given to the student teachers (Smith, 2010:34-41). Smith and Lev-Ari (2005:289-302) indicated that it is important for pre-service teachers to talk to supervisors, mentor teachers and peers.

Endeley (2014:147–160) emphasised supervision is essential for practicum implementation. As a resource person, feedback interpreter, and assessor, the college supervisor plays a crucial role in the practicum's implementation, believing that the tutor should use their abilities to make these experiences outcome-oriented rather than just evaluating teaching courses. The tutor should hold meetings and talk with placement school mentors, academics, appropriate principals, and other teachers. College supervisors are responsible for directing student teachers' lessons and other activities during the practicum, providing direction and counselling and providing feedback so they can self-critique and reflect to inform further lesson planning. The role of college tutors is also essential to ensuring the efficient implementation of practicum. This means that college supervisors should work closely with school mentors, help student teachers, and visit schools regularly (Beck & Kosnik, 2000:207–224; Mazo, 2015:296-304). For student-teachers, it is common

for them to look to their college supervisors for guidance and role models with whom they may connect positively (Sag, 2008:117–132).

Similarly, Zhu (2011:769) claimed that reflection could assist pre-service teachers in "bettering their teaching practice" and prepare them for their jobs. Pre-service teachers are "more likely to build a powerful professional identity" through reflection, according to Cattley (2007:341). Furthermore, "one of the most crucial" challenges associated with the practicum is the "evaluation techniques and processes" of pre-service teachers (Brooker, Muller, Mylonas & Hansford, 1998:5). According to NCATE (2008), an assessment may also help pre-service teachers perform better during practicum.

However, the goals of TESO for more extensive fieldwork, efficient monitoring, and practice were put into practice in a way that the implementation could be affected by several problems. Even though the practicum is an essential component of a teacher education programme (Fekede & Gemechis, 2009:107-116), the programme's actual implementation still had concerns. The issue was the "impracticality" of the practicum component of the programme. Some of the reasons cited are lack of coherence of courses; beliefs and perceptions; lack of shared understanding among student teachers, college supervisors, and mentors; the practices of reflection; lack of strong partnerships between schools and colleges; the type and intensity of supervision and assessment given by college supervisors; the quality of cooperating teachers' professional support, (MoE, 2011; Panigrani, 2013:23-28). Even though the pre-service practicum programme was put in place, the problems have continued to date (Geletu & Mekonnen, 2019:40-43; Tadesse, 2014:97-98).

Of concern for this study is that the experiences across colleges and their partner schools are inconsistent, causing dissatisfaction among the stakeholders. If these problems are not addressed, they could affect how well the practicum programme works and, in the long run, how student teachers see their jobs (Quick & Sieborger, 2005:1-4). Therefore, in light of the constructivist theory of learning, this study looked into how the Hossana College of Teacher Education and its partner schools put into practice what they had learned in their practicums.

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1.3   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory is defined as "a systematic body of ideas, norms, and principles that can be investigated" by Gay, Mills, and Asian (2014, in Eberlein, 2015:53). Within the confines of crucial border assumptions, theories aim to challenge and expand existing knowledge and explain, predict, and interpret phenomena. The theoretical framework of a research project is an underlying structure that can either express or explain the theory behind the project. The research problem is introduced and explained in the theoretical framework (Abend, 2008:173–199). In light of this, theories and ideas about education and how students learn in general, and the literature on teaching practicum related to the process and practices of its practical implementation in particular, provide the theoretical basis for understanding what pre-service practicum is and how it works.

Thus, the school experience or teaching practicum has deep historical roots that grew out of the apprenticeship system and were institutionalised by Joseph Lancaster in the late eighteenth century (Vera, 1969). It is based on the notion that a pupil-teacher will model himself after his master (Brown, 1975). Fish (1989) stated that approaches to students' teaching practicums shifted from the process of imitating the old traditional and conservative notions and skills to a method of investigation and exploration. He thought that this growth was related to the rise of constructivism and the idea of the reflective practitioner.

My study looks into the techniques and methods for implementing practicums for pre-service programmes at a teacher education college; hence, I used the Vygotskian social constructivist theory of learning to guide this study (Abdal-Haqq, 1998; McLeod, 2022; Richardson, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978). The Vygotskian social constructivist theory of learning is a theory that focuses on exploring the extent to which children learn best when they interact with others, particularly those who are more experienced and can offer guidance and encouragement to master new skills, rather than when they learn in isolation. In social constructivist settings, people learn when they work together to create meaning and knowledge.

Thus, the theoretical framework of this study is based on the Vygotskian social constructivist theory of learning because, as stated in the guidelines of the primary school practicum document, the practicum programme contains the premise of a new paradigm shift, that is, the constructivist theory of learning. However, whether the current actual practice in the practicum implementation is in conformity with the document or not, this needs to be explored and identified (Geletu & Mekonnen, 2019; Muhammed, Tadesse, Abdela, & Wakgari, 2014).

Therefore, I will look into the pre-service practicum programme and determine if it is being run the way it was planned. If not, I will attempt to find out why and how, and to establish the tasks and roles of the participants in light of the basic Vygotskian social constructivist theory of the philosophical underpinnings of the programme, which are thought to provide a basis for the activities and goals of the programme. Thus, a detailed theoretical framework appears in Chapter 2.

1.4   PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

One of the significant contributions of TESO to Ethiopian teacher education has been the recognition of the practicum as an integral element of a teacher education programme, outlining the essence of a reflective teacher education programme. According to constructivist educators, based on a review of literature, an in-depth evaluation of educational theories and practices in light of teachers' ideas and experiences is necessary for teacher growth. Consequently, these learning opportunities should encourage reflection, conversation, critical thinking, ownership of knowledge and understanding in context and among teaching communities (Black & Ammon, 1992; Magdeline, 2013; O'Loughlin, 1992; Zeichner, 1990).

Thus, pre-service practicum courses should provide a forum for student teachers to discuss and reflect on their prior knowledge. In such a way, student teachers should be stimulated to transform the conceptual content of lectures, readings and their classmates' reports to discover their opinions, perspectives, beliefs, values, principles and approaches to controversial educational issues (Tatto, 1998:66-77). The constructivist theory of learning is recommended as an effective means to help

student teachers acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and disposition (Selwyn, 2016:83). There are many successful techniques for employing constructivist theory of learning in pre-service teacher education programmes. Many different strategies have been used to promote skills and habits of constructivist approach in student teachers through their school-based experiences. At least two broad strategies in the literature can be distinguished as follows:

1. Practices that are closely supervised (Cruikshank, 1985; Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991; Zeichner, 1986);
2. Portfolio compilation (Antonek, McCormick & Donato, 1997; Francis, 1995; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Nguyen, 2021; Orland-Barak & Maskit, 2017; Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991).

However, though the extended practicum experiences and portfolio compilation are included in the pre-service practicum teacher education programme proposed by TESO, they do not seem consistent with their theoretical orientations (Geletu & Mekonnen, 2019:40-51; Tadesse, 2014:97-110). The supervisors' school visits during student teacher placements are limited. The dialogue between student teachers and their supervisors and cooperating teachers in teaching conferences, which were expected to promote reflective skills and habits of reflection, have not materialised. The proposed strong school-college partnership has not proved practical and the participation of cooperating teachers in the process as co-educators is limited. Despite the proposed paradigm shift to implement the practicum programme, it seems very difficult to imagine that the tasks in the practicum courses are built on the basic assumptions and goals underlying the programme. In professional knowledge development, the roles of student teachers, educators and cooperating teachers do not seem to have made the shift from the traditional transmission model (Geletu & Mekonnen, 2019:40-51; Panigrani, 2013:23–28; Tadesse, 2014:97-110).

Teacher education institutions had initially doubted the practicality of the proposed practicum component proposed by TESO for various reasons of their own. One is financial and logistical constraints, because many schools where student teachers

could be placed are widely scattered over geographical distances. Another is the doubtful academic capacity of the candidates entering the programme and the school teachers working as cooperating teachers who have to cope with a heavy workload and large class size (Fantu, 2013; Fekede, 2009; MOE, 2018).

Furthermore, as is the case in many educational reforms, its implementation has been characterised by a lack of conceptual clarity on behalf of the teacher educators and cooperating teachers as programme implementers — that is, the traditional conceptualisation of the practicum among primary implementers; poor organisation in teacher education programmes and schools; poor integration with campus-based courses; a lack of shared understanding among the student teachers, teacher educators and mentors; and the actual practice of the practicum has been characterised by chaos and drifts very much from its intentions (Geneme & Michael, 2018:21-25).

Moreover, Ethiopia's practicum implementation history has been plagued by many issues. The conceptual basis of the practicum has been reduced to the characteristics of the apprenticeship model of teacher education. Student teachers are perceived as beginning teachers with scientific theory and are placed in schools to imitate and model teaching routines. Reflection, at its best, is reduced to compiling a response to some items and copying previously organised documents. The triadic relationship is virtually non-existent, and the dyadic interaction between the cooperating teacher and the student teacher has been compromised because of a lack of clarity on role expectations, poor organisation in training mentors and misconceptions about the role of schools in the preparation of teacher education students (Ahmed, 2013; Fantu, 2014; Geneme & Michael, 2018:21-25; MOE, 2011: 2-5). In addition, the report to the Ethiopian Education Roadmap (MOE, 2018:39) indicates that some of the problems are bad organisation and evaluation of the practicum and not enough interns mentoring.

Based on this, the pre-service practicum programme document states that there is a need to view things differently when a paradigm shift occurs as the focus should be on different facets of the phenomenon (MOE, 2011:2-3). This is very true, because

the best way to implement a paradigm shift is for programme practices to build on the set of beliefs and basic assumptions on which the new paradigm is based. A paradigm is a set of beliefs and assumptions shared by practitioners in a field so they can agree on the problems to be solved, the rules that govern the process and the standards for measuring performance (Mertens, 2006).

Consequently, after reviewing the literature and having experienced and witnessed the same issues and concerns from those individuals participating in conducting the practicum programme in the research area, I felt highly motivated to know the current state of the implementation of pre-service practicum in the study area. Therefore, it can be inferred from the assertion mentioned above that more research is required to explore the conformity between the intentions of the constructivist teacher education framework in the primary school practicum programme document and its actual implementation. Thus, it appears that the claim of the intentions of the constructivist teacher education framework in the practicum programme document and the reality in the actual implementation are extremely different. Accordingly, a research gap exists, which this study sought to fill.

Features identified as quality indicators of a reflective approach conceptualised in constructivist pedagogy (Abdul Haq, 1999; Fosnot, 1989; Richadson, 1997) gives the impression that the pre-service practicum programme document is theoretically acceptable. But the implementation process, especially the beliefs of the participants and the actual practices and contexts, needs to be looked at in the context of a constructivist theory of learning for teacher education. I need to find out what makes it a constructivist framework and what factors affect its implementation.

Thus, a practical problem exists when there is a gap between an empirical condition and a normative belief concerning that condition. These kinds of practical issues require action or correction. Concerning this, investigating how involved parties understand and put the practicum into practice is the focus of this study. How student teachers, placement teachers (school mentors), and teacher educators (tutors) perceive the practicum can have a major effect on how they do their jobs in the future.

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Because of the problems and gaps in the way the practicum programme is currently run, it is important to ensure that general student teachers, partner school teachers, tutors and the college practicum coordination team understand their roles and responsibilities, as these are the key stakeholders involved in the practicum courses. To this end, the study identifies specific ways to improve the practicum programme's effectiveness through data gathered. The information on the barriers to effective practicum programme implementation at the research site may aid in analysing the potential problem environments that shape the practicum programme's effectiveness in the constructivist framework.

1.4.1 Main Research Question

Thus, the main research question for this study is: *How does the Hossana College of Teacher Education put the basic ideas of the constructivist theory of learning into practice in the pre-service practicum programme?*

In light of the main research question, the sub-research questions listed below are important parts of the research study.

1.4.2 Sub-Research Questions

1. How do college teacher educators, college deans, college practicum coordinators, associate teachers, school principals, and trainees perceive and experience the purposes and practices of pre-service practicum aligned to the intentions of constructivist theory of learning in the teacher education programme?
2. How do the Hossana College of Teacher Education and its partner schools support and guide the pre-service trainees during the pre-service practicum programme on the basis of constructivist theory of learning?
3. How well does the learning context (environment) at the Hossana College of Teachers' Education pre-service practicum programme encourage teacher trainees to be actively involved in the learning tasks that are aligned with a constructivist framework for teacher education?

4. What challenges are preventing the tasks and participants' roles from matching up with the assumptions and goals of the constructivist theory of learning in the pre-service practicum at Hossana Primary Teacher Education College?

1.5 STUDY AIM AND OBJECTIVES

This study aimed to investigate the current practices of the pre-service practicum aligned with the constructivist theory of learning at the Hossana College of Teacher Education.

1.5.1   The Aim of the Study

This study aimed to investigate the current practices of the pre-service practicum aligned with the constructivist theory of learning at the Hossana College of Teacher Education and, if needed, provide recommendations and a proposed framework to improve the quality of the practicum programme based on the social constructivist theory of learning.

1.5.2   Specific Objectives

The objective of the study was to investigate teacher educators', college deans', college practicum coordinators', associate teachers', school principals', and trainees' perceptions and experiences about their roles and tasks in light of a social constructivist teacher education framework in the practicum programme practices to improve the quality of the programme and to ascertain whether the practicum is relevant to pre-service training at Hossana College of Teacher Education. The specific objects were

1. To investigate key stakeholders perceptions and experiences of the purposes and practices of pre-service practicum aligned to the intentions of constructivist theory of learning in the teacher education programme.

2. To find out how the pre-service trainees at Hosana Primary Teacher Education College are being supported and guided during the pre-service practicum programme.

3. To explore how the learning context (environment) can promote the teacher trainees' active engagement with the learning tasks, it was investigated in light of a constructivist teacher education framework during the pre-service practicum programme at the Hossana College of Teacher Education.

4. To find out the challenges preventing the tasks and participants' roles from matching up with the assumptions and goals of the constructivist theory of learning in the pre-service practicum at Hosana Primary Teacher Education College.

1.6   RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

What is meant by 'methodology' while conducting research is a planned approach to answering a question? How research should be conducted is studied scientifically. Therefore, research methodology refers to the overall approach taken by researchers in describing, understanding and forecasting events. The process of learning how to learn is also part of this field of research. Thus, the goal of research methodology is to set up a plan for further research (Creswell, 2014; Neuman, 2014).

Moreover, what is meant by 'research methodology' is the overall approach to gathering and analysing data from studies (Mcmillan & Schumacher, 2014). Diverse forms of research employ different techniques, which are generally understood to encompass not just how the research is conducted but also the data that is collected and analysed. When discussing a research problem or study, the term 'methodology' refers to the set of procedures used to answer questions such as: Why was this study conducted? How was the research problem defined? How and why was the hypothesis formulated? What data were collected and what specific method was adopted? Why was this particular technique of analysing the data used? and many others (Patel & Patel, 2019:48).

Researchers suggest that research methodologies can be viewed in a dichotomised way: logical positivism and phenomenological inquiry. Most educational research follows the first type, which is based on natural science assumptions. The second type, on the other hand, uses interpretive research methods like ethnography, case study, phenomenology and grounded theory (Al-Habil, 2014:13; Fox & Miller, 1998:1718; Ritchie & Lewis., 2003; White, 1999:13). So, the goal of this research was to find out how the basic underlying philosophical assumptions of the constructivist theory of learning are used in the practices of the pre-service practicum programme at the Hossana Teacher Education College.

1.6.1   Research Design

The research design refers to the logical chain connecting empirical data to a study's guiding research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusion. In addition, it is a strategy for collecting, evaluating and interpreting data by an investigator. It is also a logical verification model that enables researchers to conclude causal relationships between the variables under inquiry. The precise meaning of a research design is given by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:58) as follows: "It's the strategy that connects philosophical principles to particular tactics". In short, this part includes the research paradigm, research approach, as well as the research strategy that is used in this study.

1.6.1.1   Research paradigm

A philosophical framework serving as the investigation's compass is known as a research paradigm. It provides a structure for the research study's theories and methods by providing a set of beliefs and understandings. Ontology, epistemology, axiology and research methodology are the components of a research paradigm. In support of this, Taber (2014:1863) stated that, "...methodological decisions in educational research are informed by axiological as well as ontological and epistemological considerations". As a result, an interpretive/constructivist research paradigm underpinned this study since this approach aimed to comprehend social phenomena in their context and to understand the phenomena through the

interpretations individuals ascribe to them (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:19). The phrase 'interpretive' relates to and centres on meaning research. This implies that understanding human behaviour requires considering how necessary the action is to the individual. Grix (2004:83) explains that in interpretivist research, the people doing the research are deeply rooted in the social reality they are looking into. In other words, they are not 'apart' from the subject they are looking into.

1.6.1.2   Research approach

The investigation of a topic in its context is known as qualitative research. Its name implies that it is concerned with the quality of things, which includes occurrences, processes and experiences that are difficult to comprehend and quantify in terms of number, intensity or frequency. Its purpose is to provide a comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon, including its processes, meaning and context (Hays & Singh, 2011:4). In addition, the definition of qualitative research includes any type of study model or design that collects information through verbal, visual, tactile, olfactory and gustatory senses. This information is presented as descriptive narratives in the form of field notes, recordings or transcriptions from audio- and videotapes and other textual documents, as well as visuals like photographs or moving images (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, in Solomon, 2004:4). The inductive technique, the focus on specific instances of individuals or events, and the weight placed on words rather than numbers are the primary sources of power in qualitative research. Because of this, this study relied on qualitative research methods to find evidences.

1.6.1.3   Research type/strategy

Educational research poses varying research questions and subsequently seeks to answer them, but different questions induce different research methods. The research method used can vary depending on the researcher's epistemological position and the nature of the research questions. To this end, a case study enabled the collection of in-depth shared meanings that individuals have about the phenomenon under study. One of the reasons I chose a qualitative case study

approach (Merriam, 1988:12) is that I am interested in describing and figuring out how processes work.

1.6.2   Research Methods

This part of the research briefly explains how the research participants are chosen and how the data are gathered and analysed.

1.6.2.1   *Selection of participants*

The participants of the study comprised one academic vice-dean of the college, one practicum coordinator from the college, five college tutors (one from each stream), six mentor teachers (one from each of the six cooperative schools), six placement school principals (one from each of the six collaborative schools), and ten trainees from third-year trainees (two from each of the streams). The study, therefore, involved a total of 29 participants. In all cases, the participants are selected purposively in the second-semester of the academic year. Hence, selecting student-teachers participants was made by considering class participation, expressiveness and academic concerns.

1.6.2.2   *Data collection*

As already discussed, the research questions being addressed must be considered when deciding the data-gathering method to employ. In light of this, in-depth semi-structured interviews, observation and written document analysis were primarily used, along with field notes. As described by LeCompte and Preissle (1991, in Solomon, 2004:5), observational recordings and commentary on what was observed, how it was observed and potential interpretations make up field notes in most cases. Thus, the data were obtained by using the following instruments:

i) Semi-structured interviews: As a researcher, I had to adhere to the Ethiopian government's COVID-19 protocols and regulations and Unisa College of Education Ethics protocols. I adhered to the COVID-19 requirements of social distancing, sanitising, and wearing masks, which must be followed, adhered

to, and observed when conducting fieldwork for research purposes. I contacted and arranged specific dates and times with the participants for the interviews and in some cases, dates, times and venues were shared based on participants agreement. All interviews were recorded. Moreover, follow-up interviews were conducted to ensure that the information transcribed is correct and that the context remains true. Interview guides (see Appendix B-E of semi-structured interview items) were used during the face-to-face interviews. Semi-structured interviews were deemed most appropriate as it allowed the researcher to plan flexible questions and dig deeper into the planned questions to get more information. The interviews guides consisted of semi-structured questions to allow the participants to express their thoughts about particular questions.

ii) Document analysis: For the document analysis process, the practicum guidelines, students' Practicum Portfolios, school reports, practicum evaluation checklists, and Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) documents were used to investigate the pre-service practicum implementation with the assumed intentions that are consistent with the constructivist theory of learning. The TESO document is available from the Ethiopian website or MOE, regional offices, or schools, but the practicum guidelines, students' practicum portfolios, school reports, and practicum evaluation checklists are from the college of education. The document analysis process was used with a list that is designed with specific criteria to evaluate the documents as stated. The information gathered from the documents was organised and assessed against the set standards. Then, those documents were scheduled according to classified themes. A sample of each document used in the analysis is filed in the appendices.

iii) Unstructured Observation: This is a particularly efficient technique used in the study to learn what people do in specific settings, the habits and interpersonal patterns of their daily lives.

1.6.2.3 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis defines "working with the data; organising them; reducing them into manageable components; coding them; synthesising them; and searching for patterns" (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013). Finding trends, ideas, themes and meanings are the main goals of qualitative data analysis. According to Neuman (2014:477), qualitative data's definition might be defined as written words, phrases or symbols that depict individuals, behaviours and social events. Because of this, the information gathered from semi-structured interviews and observations were able to be turned into text.

For confidentiality and manageability, the data were coded using three different coding types in the procedure. Open coding was used to divide, analyse, compare, think about and classify the data. Axial coding was used to figure out the relationship between categories and their subcategories so the data could be used in new ways. Lastly, selective coding was utilised for methodically choosing the essential categories and connecting them to additional categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008:198; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007: 67; Neuman, 2014:481-484). Since the study was qualitative, the data in this case study were analysed using thematic analysis, narrative descriptions, and reflective analysis using intuition and personal judgement to get a full picture of what the data is all about.

Semi-structured interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analysed to look for patterns in the data sets. The analysis was an ongoing and interactive dynamic process, indicating that data gathering, processing and reporting were interrelated. To reduce the problems and challenges of data analysis, I was very involved in each step looking for clear themes and groups.

The documents were also analysed and used to examine the whole picture and the standards for implementing the pre-service practicum programme in light of the constructivist teacher education framework. These documents assisted in describing the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the student teachers' practicum. In addition, empirical and theoretical evidence was used to reflect on the data collected.

Finally, all the data sets were eventually gathered, transcribed, and analyzed for triangulation. The same treatment was given to information gleaned from interviews, observations, and document analysis. Data were gathered in accordance with the procedure during and following interviews, observations, and document analysis, and then categorized and analyzed in light of the recurring themes that emerged from the data. The Practicum Guidelines and other documents were looked at in terms of their contents and goals and done by comparing the topics to the themes and categories. Thus, a detailed methodological approach was indicated in Chapter 4.

1.7   MEASURES OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

According to Lincoln & Guba (1985:300), credibility, transferability, dependability, conformability, and triangulation were used to address the study's trustworthiness. These steps also secured the reliability of the study's findings. The study's length, breadth, and depth all contributed to the research's increased reputation. Members' opinions regarding the veracity of the data, the accuracy of the findings, and the plausibility of the conclusions were first sought through the use of member checks. This is referred to as the "most critical strategy for creating credibility" by Lincoln and Guba (1985:314). Within the context of this study, I provided interview transcripts to those who participated (that is, transcribed interviews were sent to the participants asking them to provide feedback on the accuracy of their interview conversations). Besides, I indicated the transferability of results to colleges in similar contexts. Lastly, I presented extensive descriptions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1998) and participant narratives, including direct quotes from the interviews. Thus, the detailed version of the trustworthiness of this study was indicated in the research methodology section of this study, Chapter 4.

1.8   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Unless properly handled, data collection techniques may pose various ethical problems. Researchers (Arifin, 2018:30–33; Cohen et al., 2007; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:338–339) explain ethics as any set of rules or guidance or

human discretion on the part of the researcher that directs the appropriate treatment of a person who participated in the research. Due attention was given to ethical issues before, during and after data collection to secure sufficient and pertinent data collection. To this end, I applied to UNISA's College of Education Ethics Review Committee and received ethical clearance. Then I requested and obtained permission from the training college and placement schools to conduct research in the given institutions. In the process of the research, I spoke with the people taking part in the research to ensure that they felt free to talk and have their thoughts recorded. In addition, I explained the study's goals and methods to participants before I began collecting data. I also assured them that the information they gave would be private and would not be shared with anyone. I also let them know that they were under no obligation to answer any of the questions and could withdraw from the study at any moment if they so choose. To ensure the privacy of human subjects, I used pseudonyms instead of their real names. As a result, the key issues of ethical considerations are presented in detail in the research methodology part of this study, Chapter 4.

1.9   KEY CONCEPTS

The key concepts and words used in this study are discussed in relation to the contributions that the study is expected to make to effective teacher preparation. In Ethiopia, primary school teachers are prepared through a pre-service education curriculum at colleges of teacher education, ostensibly in collaboration with primary schools. Therefore, the pre-service practicum programme is one of the pre-service education curricula at teacher education colleges. In primary schools, cooperative teachers play an important role in socialising and integrating student teachers into the real world of the classroom. The progress accomplished in this area is documented in the practice teaching file. Through such a method, student teachers are equipped to give outstanding education in their classrooms. As part of contextualising this study, it is important to give meaning and understanding to certain terms used within this study. These key terms are used throughout the thesis.

1.9.1   Practicum Experience

The literature uses "student teaching practicum" or "practice of teaching" interchangeably to refer to the period when teacher education programmes require students to practice and learn from the classroom teaching practices of cooperative teachers, to attend all school activities, and to practice guided lead teaching. In this research, the terms "practicum," "field experience "or" student teaching" are interchangeably used. The field experience and student teaching offer trainees an opportunity to integrate the knowledge acquired through different coursework. Practicum experience assists teacher candidates in developing and refining their teaching skills and competencies for their professional careers (Merc, 2015; MOE, 2003:7).

1.9.2   Pre-Service Practicum

This course includes school-based and classroom teaching practices that trainee teachers receive before being licensed to teach. This course occurs at teacher education institutions and placement schools (Morrison, 2016; Teferra et al., 2018:18).

1.9.3   Triad

The "practicum triad" is a term used to refer to the relationship between the student teacher, school mentor teacher, and teacher educator. Even though the school mentor teacher and student teacher are at the centre of much of the practicum, the summative assessment points usually involve all three people (Haigh and Ell, 2014; MOE, 2011:5).

1.9.4   Consistency

Meaningful task alignment refers to the alignment of a task's goals and processes, which increases the task's meaningfulness, credibility and intentionality and impacts student teacher commitment (MOE, 2011:38).

1.9.5   Organisation

"Resources" refers to things like managing the resources, space and time needed to meet the basic assumptions and goals of the teacher education programme practices and defining roles (MOE, 2011:38).

1.9.6   Reflectivity

Reflectivity refers to the types and levels of critical thinking and the new ways of teaching that teachers encourage (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Valli, 1992; Van Manen, 1977).

1.9.7   Student teachers

Student teachers are the trainees engaged in a programme for pre-service teachers. They are prospective student teachers who are assigned to the practicum programme. In this research, the terms "prospective teachers"' "would be teachers" "teachers-to-be", "trainee teachers" and "trainee classroom" "teachers to be" are used interchangeably (MOE, 2007:14).

1.9.8   Supervisor

Supervisor refers to instructors from a college who were hired as tutors to support and assess the teaching development of prospective teachers. In this research, the terms "teacher educator", "college tutor", and "college supervisor" are also interchangeably used (MOE, 2007:14).

1.9.9   Learning to Teach

In this study, "learning to teach" refers to a set of skills, strategies, and pedagogical positions that help set up routines in the classroom and make teaching easier. (MOE, 2011:2).

1.9.10 Mentor

According to the Ministry, a school teacher is tasked with supporting and assessing trainees. At the same time, they practice in the actual classroom. In this research, the terms "cooperative teacher," "placement teacher," "lead teacher", and "associate teacher" are also interchangeably used (MOE, 2011:5).

1.10 CHAPTER OUTLINE

This thesis comprises six chapters, with each chapter having an introduction, sub-titles, and a summary.

Chapter One: Introduction - In the first introductory chapter, those fundamental aspects that could give essential information on the general nature of the study were presented. To this end, the introduction, the background of the study, some highlights about what the problem is all about, theoretical insights, key concepts, its aims and objectives, importance, the rationale for investigating the issues, and a synopsis of the research methodology were addressed.

Chapter Two: The Theoretical Framework of the Study - In this chapter, the theoretical framework that guides the study is presented. In addition, the chapter gives insights into the conceptualisation of practicum used to interpret the effective implementation of a practicum programme based on the theoretical and empirical evidence presented in this part of the study.

Chapter Three: Pre-service Practicum in teacher education programmes - The chapter presents practicum experiences, beginning with international and national contexts and progressing to the study area, which is focused on pre-service practicum. In this chapter, the main point is a situation analysis of what is actually and usually going on in the research context mentioned.

Chapter Four: Research Design and Methodology: A thorough description of the research technique is provided in this chapter. The paradigm, strategy, and nature of the research are all covered by the research design. The study methods include

procedures, instruments, and strategies for gathering and analysing data. The study's trustworthiness and ethical considerations are also examined.

Chapter Five: Presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the data: This part of the thesis describes the report, analyses the data, and explains the data collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, observation, and written documents. The interpretations of the data were also discussed in this chapter.

Sixth Chapter: Discussion of Key Findings and Conclusion: In the final chapter, an overview of the study and its significant findings are presented. Then, the conclusions from the actual results are drawn. Lastly, based on the findings, some possible recommendations, implications for theory, policy, and practice, and a proposed framework (educational contributions) are forwarded.

1.11 THE CHAPTER'S SYNOPSIS

This chapter introduced the research that is the basis of this thesis. Offering concrete proof of the current procedures, difficulties, and potential outcomes of the practicum implementation programme is helpful and anticipated to be beneficial to practicum stakeholders. As a result, it is crucial to conduct an inquiry to ascertain the usefulness and achievement of the practicum programme's goal at the Hossana College of Teacher Education. The chapter also introduces a synopsis of the methodology that guides this study, which uses qualitative approaches to collecting data to investigate the identified problem. In the next chapter, I explain how my study fits into the theoretical framework that guided the research.

CHAPTER TWO
THE RESEARCH'S THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR PRE-SERVICE PRACTICUM

2.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the theoretical frameworks relevant to the research. In this chapter, the theoretical framework that guides the study is presented. The given theoretical frameworks help to make a strong link between this study and what has been developed already. The study's basis derives from theories of learning. It does not stand in isolation. Therefore, the constructivist teaching and learning theories were adopted to guide this study. In addition, the chapter gives insights into the conceptualisation of practicum used to interpret the effective implementation of a practicum programme based on theoretical and empirical evidence presented in this part of the study. This chapter is also concerned with the underlying principles of practicum implementation. Thus, the following paragraphs present the theoretical framework and its descriptions.

2.2   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

The use of theoretical frameworks has developed into a crucial aspect and accepted practice in research. A theoretical framework, in the words of Kombo and Tromp (2013:56), "is a set of related ideas based on theories". They also assert that a theoretical framework is a set of arguments deduced from and validated by information or proof. Research is strengthened by using theoretical frameworks because they provide clear linkages between the current study and what has already been developed. According to research, a theoretical framework serves as a pillar or a support system. According to Vinz (2015), a theoretical framework offers an investigation's scientific justification. A theoretical framework is also a review of existing theories that helps figure out how to build the argument. Thus, this study cannot be seen in a vacuum in this sense.

In light of this, theories and ideas about education and how students learn in general, and the literature on teaching practicum related to the process and practices of its practical implementation in particular, provide the theoretical basis for understanding what a teaching practicum is and how it works.

Likewise, this study investigates the implementation strategies and practices of the practicum concerning the pre-service programmes at a teacher education college; hence, I used the Vygotskian social constructivist theory of learning to guide this study (Abdal-Haqq, 1998; McLeod, 2022; Richardson, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978). The Vygotskian social constructivist theory of learning is a theory that focuses on exploring the extent to which it contends that children learn best when they interact with others, particularly those who are more experienced and can offer guidance and encouragement to master new skills, rather than when they learn in isolation. In social constructivist settings, people also learn when they work together to create meaning and knowledge (Gordon, 2009; McLeod, 2019; 2022). Therefore, the Vygotskian social constructivist theory of learning is more relevant to the current study.

Thus, the theoretical framework of this study is based on the Vygotskian social constructivist theory of learning because, as stated in the guidelines of the primary school practicum document, the practicum programme contains the premise of the new paradigm shift that is the constructivist theory of learning. However, it is necessary to investigate whether the actual practices in the practicum implementation are in accordance with the document (Geletu & Mekonnen, 2019:40–51; Muhammed et al., 2014:27-28; Panigrani, 2013:23-28; Tadesse, 2014:97-110).

As Section 4.3.1 of this study makes clear, Vygotskian social constructivism is the basis for this research. In 1978, Lev Vygotsky developed the idea of social constructivism as a way to think about learning. According to Vygotsky (1978), the development of an individual's own meaning and understanding is a result of mutually advantageous social or group interactions, mostly through cooperation and negotiations. According to Vygotsky, teaching and learning are essentially about a group's exchange of knowledge and negotiation of it. The significance of social

interaction in cognitive development is emphasised by Vygotsky's theories (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky was adamant that 'making sense' requires community, which is why he felt so strongly about it.

As discussed above, it is clear that Vygotsky's theory has important implications for how pre-service practicum programmes are run. In particular, college supervisors and placement school teachers must guide, support and encourage student teachers while also helping them learn ways to solve problems that can be used in a variety of settings. Consequently, there needs to be a solid foundation for pre-service practicums as a sort of educational practice. It is founded on a number of assumptions, ideas, values, and goals found in philosophy and theory. Assumptions like this underpin everything from how classes are structured to the types of resources students and faculties have access to. Education policy, objectives and curriculum design are all influenced by these presumptions.

In order to find out how much the tasks and roles of the participants in the practicum programme are based on the programme's assumptions and goals and why the programme's practices are not in line with the programme's beliefs and goals, essential features have been set to look at the necessary qualities for evaluating each area in this study.

2.2.1   Assumptions and Goals

The programme procedures should recognise the underlying presumptions and objectives as valid (both in the practicum activities or tasks and in the programme participants' roles in the process). Therefore, the study's primary goal would be to determine how well these presumptions and objectives are achieved by examining the activities and participant roles. The basic assumptions within constructivist teacher education are the following:

- Knowledge is built through interaction and talk, usually between a beginner and an expert (Williams & Burden, 1997).

- According to social constructivism, learning is a collaborative process and knowledge develops from individuals' interactions with their culture and society. When concepts move from the inter-psychological plane (first on the social level, between people) to the intra-psychological plane (later, the individual level, within the child), they are 'appropriated', or learned. This is called conceptual migration (inside the mind of the individual learner) (McLeod, 2019; 2022; Randall & Thornton, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978:57).
- In social constructivist environments, people learn by getting involved, asking questions, solving problems and working together as a group (Abdul Haqq, 1999; Richardson, 1997).

With these basic assumptions of constructivist theory of learning guiding the goals, a pre-service practicum programme can be set up. A constructivist teacher education framework should aim at the development of a reflective pedagogy that encompasses the ability to act, the ability to self-regulate, the ability to communicate and the ability to negotiate, with a focus on empowering student teachers. The pre-service practicum programme is meant to help student teachers become skilled, well-educated and self-reflective professionals who can use constructivist theory of learning when they teach in schools.

2.2.2   Tasks

To achieve good integration of theory and practice and to support the education and development of student teachers' attitudes and dispositions, well-designed learning tasks and activities that are compatible with the basic theoretical orientations of the programme need to be implemented. Accordingly, the tasks and activities in the pre-service practicum programme include reflective dialogues and portfolio-building experiences to promote the student teachers' reflective abilities. Thus, to figure out what these tasks are, the most important things to look at are transparency, integration of theory and practice, consistency and an organisational framework (McLeod, 2019; 2022; Vygotsky, 1978).

2.2.3 Roles

Depending on the programme's guiding assumptions and objectives, student teachers and teacher educators play different roles. In light of the fundamental beliefs and principles of the constructivist theory of learning, the key participants, who include cooperating teachers, teacher educators and student teachers, should assume new roles, which should be significantly different from those they may have in the traditional transmission model of teacher education programmes. This means that in the practicum courses, important aspects of roles are reflectivity, (inter)subjectivity, negotiation and regulation. They will be looked at to see how much a reflection-based approach has been taken (Chaille, 2008:3; Flores, 2015; Fosnot, 1996:206; Prawat, 1992).

To sum up, the following issues will be considered in the framework of this research study: How clear are the role expectations for all involved parties regarding what will be done, when and how? In other words, the teaching practice, student learning assessment procedures, the conduciveness of the learning environment and the nature of support offered and partnership exhibited at the scene of the practicum are some of the issues to be stressed in the following sections, beginning with the presentation of the conceptualisations of practicum in the pre-service teacher education program.

2.3 CONEPTUALISATIONS OF PRACTICUM IN THE PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME

There are diverse conceptualisations of "practicum." Zeichner indicated that "practicum" refers to "all types of observation and teaching experiences in a pre-service teacher education programme, including field experiences before professional education course work, early field experiences related to professional courses, and student teaching and internship experiences" (Zeichner, 1992: 297). The idea of "field experience" has changed throughout time. The historical evolution of field experience has been classified differently by various authors. The traditional and inquiry-oriented conceptualisations of the practicum were distinguished by

Zeichner (1992: 293–307). During the traditional definition of the practicum, student teachers were mostly expected to put into practice what they had learned in teacher preparation programmes. This was based on the behaviourist view of how people learn.

The field experience is mainly perceived as an opportunity for modelling and applying theory to practice. Student teachers are required to demonstrate what they have studied in teacher training programmes. Experts say that field experiences help future teachers build their pedagogical skills, strengthen their growing beliefs, and put theory into practice (Koross, 2016:76–85; Qazi, Rawat, & Thomas, 2012:44–57; Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005:289–302).

Moreover, Zeichner characterised the recent development in understanding the practicum as a research-based or inquiry-oriented practicum. Rooted in the understanding that learning to teach is a process that transcends teacher education programmes, the emphasis is placed on inquiring about and reflecting on one or more teaching practices and theories in education. In doing so, students are expected to develop the skills of reflective practice that would help them in their professional development. The practicum must promote reflection on teaching practices and theories. Following the work of Donald Schön (1983:49–69) in The *Reflective Practitioner,* the practicum is designed to develop student teachers' capacity for critical reflective practice. This does not mean that students are encouraged to become negative and criticise teachers and classrooms. Instead, it tries to analyse practices in the light of one's theories of teaching and learning and the science of teaching and learning. In a never-ending effort to get better at what they do, reflective teachers are not afraid to question their own beliefs and practices.

Similar to Zeichner's classification, Le Cornu and Ewing (2008: 1799–1812) also identified three different conceptualisations of the practicum: traditional, reflective, and communities of practice. As indicated in the label used to describe students' field experiences and teaching practice, student teachers were expected to apply the knowledge acquired in universities or colleges to their practice, indicating the dichotomisation of theory and practice in universities or colleges and schools,

respectively. The specific teaching skills that students have to develop would be identified, and mentors would assist student teachers in mastering the competencies. Learning to teach was conceptualised as coming from the observations and comments of the college supervisor and the mentor, with the college supervisor representing the highest level of the source of knowledge.

Thus, the following evidence indicates that learning to teach requires reflection on one's beliefs, knowledge, and practices. The concept of teaching practice was changed into the practicum, with corresponding changes in the purpose of the practicum and roles of student teachers, mentors, and college supervisors (Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008:1799–1812). As indicated above, reflective practice—inquiring practice, theory, and consideration of ethical and social teaching issues—has become a significant purpose of the practicum. Le Cornu and Wing (2008: 1799–1812) noted that this had shifted from a focus on student teachers' teaching practices to learning how to reflect on those practices and learn how to teach. Student teachers are encouraged to theorise about their practices. Supervisors and mentors are no longer sources of knowledge or judges of teaching competence, but co-learners learning how to teach. Student teaching is not primarily intended to ensure that student teachers have mastered specific teaching competencies but rather to provide opportunities for reflection through the participation of student teachers, mentors, and university or college supervisors from the learning community's perspective.

While the literature in teacher education programmes aligns the concept of learning communities with the involvement of the triad in the construction and re-construction of theory and practice of teaching in students' field experiences (Zeichner, 1992: 293–307), Le Cornu and Wing have a different conception of the practicum. This conception shares much of the reflective practice conception of the practicum; in this case, the emphasis is on reflection, considered a social practice. Indeed, Zeichner (1992: 296-307) underlined that for reflection to succeed, it has to be viewed as a social practice that involves all the major stakeholders in students' field experiences. This means that in learning communities, the focus is on learning and reflection

together rather than on a single student-teacher or cooperating teacher reflecting on their own practice.

Developing communities of learning, practice, and reflective teacher education programmes is challenging even when most of the necessary elements are implemented. In support of this, Lave and Wenger (1991) indicated that learning to teach is participation in the communities of practice in which knowledge is located and created. Communities of practice "are made up of individuals who are passionate about or share a concern about a specific activity and who regularly interact to improve their performance" (Pattalitan, 2016: 697–700). Central to this view is the acceptance that all members (student teachers, cooperating teachers, and college supervisors) are learners in this social learning process who participate in developing their learning and creating knowledge. Teaching and learning are social activities built on collaborative educational relationships, roles, and responsibilities. Fekede (2009:43) also conceptualised the practicum diagrammatically as follows:
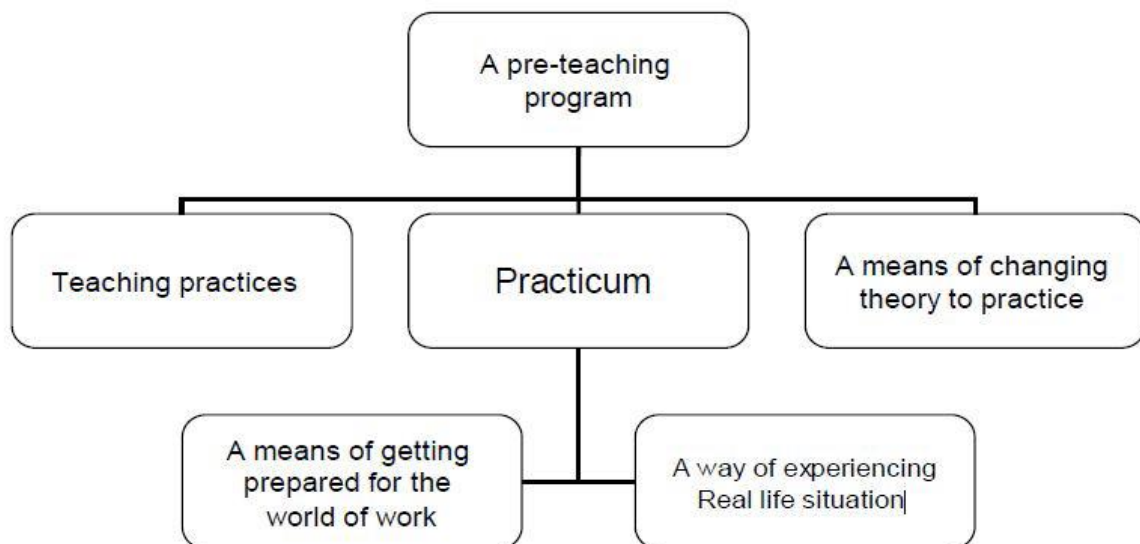
(Source: Adopted from Fekede, 2009:43)

Figure 2.1: Practicum conceptualisation

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The above diagram shows how the practicum helps future teachers get ready for the classroom by exposing them to the real world, bridging the gap between classroom theory and practice, and encouraging them to use what they have learned in the classroom. This is called integrating theoretical knowledge with real-world experience. It implies that student teachers should be given training in classroom management, pedagogy, creating lesson plans, and making and using teaching aids. Therefore, the following section presents the constructivist framework for pre-service practicum.

2.4 THE PARADIGM OF CONSTRUCTIVIST LEARNING

To explain the origins of knowledge and how people acquire it, constructivism is classified as an epistemology or a theory of learning or meaning-making. This theory says that people come up with their own knowledge by combining what they already know with new ideas and insights they get from being exposed to new ideas, information, and activities (Richardson, 1997).

Constructivism does not have to deny that there is an objective reality because "there are many ways to organise the world and different meanings or points of view for any event or idea" (Baxter & Jack, 2008:545). However, it does reject the possibility of objective knowledge (Duffy & Jonassen, 2013). This rejection of absolutism is what makes constructivist approaches to learning different from behaviourist theories in a way that goes to the heart of what it means to be human.

These variations in ontology and epistemology have far-reaching effects on the development of any theory of learning. Constructivism is a different way to talk about how people think about and get knowledge, what kinds of knowledge, skills, and activities highlight the roles of the student and the teacher, and how goals are set. Under the constructivist approach, learning is more of an internal process of figuring things out than a transfer of knowledge from one person to another. According to Cunningham:

Students don't memorise facts about their surroundings; instead, they construct explanations of those facts based on their prior knowledge and their interactions with the world. The metaphors a person already has about the world are at least as important to what they learn as any fact about reality (2013:36).

Constructivist proponent Richardson (1997) believes that information learned through transmission models is not necessarily properly integrated with past knowledge and is typically accessed and articulated solely for formal academic occasions like examinations. Learning, according to most cognitive theories and the constructivist techniques that emerged from cognitivism, should be long-lasting, transferrable, and self-regulated (Di Vesta Rieber, 1987). For this sort of learning to take place, we need systems in place that facilitate the sort of in-depth mental processing that is necessary.

In four main ideas, Good and Brophy (1994) summarized the constructivist learning philosophy. First, students create their own meaning; second, they expand on what they already know; third, they benefit from collaboration; and fourth, they mature through "genuine tasks." This implies that knowledge is attained through experience rather than the other way around. Learning in a constructivist classroom is inductive, meaning that the concept is introduced after the fact through the student's actions rather than the other way around. Typically, a constructivist lesson will start with a question, a case, or a challenge for the students to solve. In most constructivist sessions, the teacher will present a problem and then step back, giving the students just enough help to figure out how to solve it on their own.

Constructivism has several widely agreed-upon characteristics, yet it can be interpreted in various ways. In general, there are two major schools of thought among modern educators: psychological or cognitive constructivism, best exemplified by Piaget, and social constructivism, linked with Vygotsky. Richardson (1997) emphasises two key concerns that shape these interpretations: the relative importance of education for social transformation vs. education for individual growth, and the extent to which the social environment influences a person's cognitive development. We can tell the difference between "social constructivism," which

focuses on how meanings and understandings emerge through social interactions, and "cognitive constructivism," which looks at how each learner understands things in terms of developmental stages and learning styles.

Learning is defined by cognitive constructivism, which takes its cues from Piaget's (1977) work, as a process of accommodation, assimilation, and equilibration. Through coordination and the creation of new, more suitable cognitive structures, the subject resolves problems in the coherence of his or her structuring activities in this dialectic process (Saxe, 2015). An individual's pursuit of knowledge is paramount. To do this, they focus on the needs of the child and conduct research to determine how children's minds typically grow and mature (Vadeboncoeur, 2005). This perspective takes for granted that everyone's growth is governed by the same innate, natural, and biological processes regardless of their gender, socio-economic status, race, or culture (Richardson, 1997; Vadeboncoeur, 2005). It is a way of teaching and learning that removes context from the equation. Even though the focus has been on the individual, Richardson (1997) says that the Piagetian constructivist theory has been updated to include the social construction of meaning.

Social constructivism, on the other hand, goes beyond what cognitive constructivism is interested in and places special focus on the influence of classroom culture and the larger social milieu. The social, as opposed to being an added component of learning, is important to social constructivism. Meaning is constructed, and knowledge is appropriated through social interaction. Learning is more contextualised because the social component is so important. Because of this, this study is based on Vygotsky's theory of socially constructed learning, which is the basis for this investigation.

According to Abdul Haqq (1997), social constructivist pedagogy has its origins in John Dewey's writings, Piaget's research, and Vygotsky's theories. For Dewey (1933), knowledge and learning should be seen as a process of making sense of hypothetical situations. This is done by the student actively, systematically, intelligently, and with the help of others. Piaget (1977) provided actual evidence that children's minds are not blank slates but rather actively process the information they

are given. Piaget hypothesised that the mechanisms of accommodation and assimilation were key to this processing.

Social constructivism is based on the work of Lev Vygotsky, who lived from 1896 to 1934. His idea of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) explains that education is a social construct that is shaped by language and conversation. This perspective holds that established cultural norms influence the evolution of both theory and practice. The historical and cultural context of knowledge production also shapes the content of education and the way it is conveyed. Deconstructing the educational context entails uncovering and analysing the cultural assumptions, power relationships and historical factors that define it and potentially altering them if they are hindering progress toward the aims of social reform and reconstruction (Myers, 1996).

In addition, according to social constructivists, knowledge is seen as a cultural artefact of people, beyond the traditional understanding of learning as a dynamic process of knowledge creation and sense-making (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, learning should take the form of conversation, open discussion, and collaborative problem solving. Interaction with others makes it easier to think, brings information to the forefront, and makes it easier to use skills learned in the context of new topic knowledge. All of these benefits are lost when the focus shifts to the individual learner.

The following important parts of a practicum programme are mentioned in a case for changing the teacher education practicum:

- Russell, McPherson, and Martin (2001) refer to a close link between the teaching philosophies of teacher education programmes and the experiences of student teachers in classrooms.
- Darling-Hammond (2000a) suggests that the amount of time students spend on planned experiences under supervision has grown.

- According to Boud, Keogh, and Walker (2013), there is increased interest in the role of key stakeholders in getting student teachers to participate in planned experiences under close supervision.

As a result, student teachers' practicum experiences need to be reshaped to require the participants' roles to be redefined from constructivist perspectives. Hence, the following section presents the underlying principles of the practicum.

2.5   PRACTICUM PRINCIPLES

Evidence from the literature and educational theory suggests that the practicum would be most effective if it were based on specific practices and principles (Brownie, D.W. 1990; Loughran, J. 2006). The practicum principles guide activities that enable students to build their capacity for critical reflection. In its guidance for reforming the orientation of the practicum for student teachers, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (MOE, 2011:2) correctly insists on a set of principles as its conceptual foundation. For the practicum to be effective in influencing teaching culture and beliefs about teaching and learning in schools, it needs to be based on several principles that have been proven to improve teaching methods and foster the development of essential skills and values in students, teachers and college/university supervisors.

Hence, the actual design and implementation of the practicum should consider these principles and that all actions of school teachers, student teachers, college supervisors, regional education heads, responsible people at the Ministry of Education, and education faculty deans should be aligned with these principles. Failure to do so would result in reiterating the same educational problems that we failed to address, despite the declamatory rhetoric in meetings and conferences. The saying, 'action speaks louder than words' or 'walking the walk while talking the talk', is paramount to Ethiopian teacher education. Ethiopian teacher education is at a crossroads because there is uproar about the quality of education in schools. As a result, some of the main goals and mission statements in the education policy and the teacher education overhaul programme seem to have been seriously harmed.

Thus, the practicum must meet all its objectives and be implemented according to solid educational principles rather than rash judgements (MOE, 2011). Thus, this research is based on a set of rules that apply to the most important parts of teaching and learning as indicated in the figure below:

- What we teach (the *curriculum*),
- How we teach (the *pedagogy*),
- How we check if learning is taking place (the *assessment*).
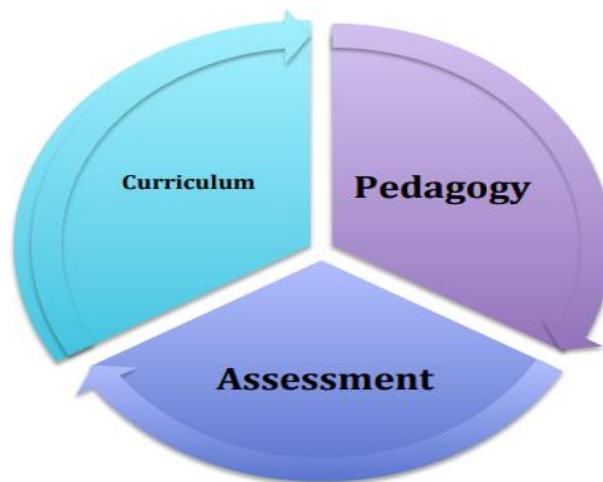
(Source: Desta, 2022)

Figure 2.2: The structure of teaching

These principles also include what we call 'organisational' or 'operating' principles, which tell us how to work professionally with other people in busy places like schools:

- Commitment to team-work;
- An orientation for problem solving;
- Self-direction;
- Communication;

This is represented in the diagram below:
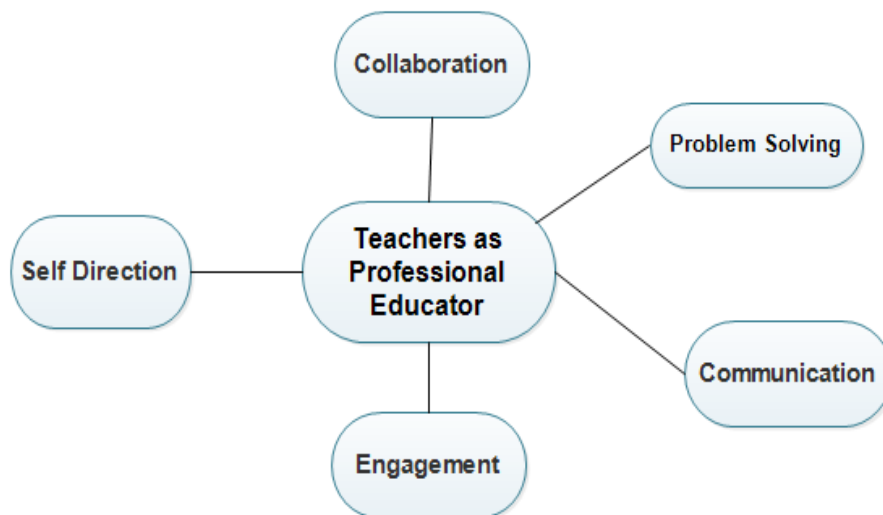
Figure 2.3: Organisational and operating principles

At the heart of the guiding principles, the objective is to prepare reflective teachers. The activities that help students build their ability to be critical and reflective are based on the practicum principles.

This means that the principles that guide the conceptual foundations of this research are a mix of those set out by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (2011:2-5) and those drawn from the lessons of research into teaching (Alton-Lee, 2003; Hattie, 2009; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012) and teacher education (Bamber & Moore, 2016; Churchill et al., 2011; Ellis, 2015). Therefore, the guiding principles of the practicum in this research are presented in the following sections.

2.5.1 Discipline Knowledge can be used, built on and expanded through Engagement

The practicum serves as a testing ground for curriculum knowledge in real-world classroom settings. Teachers who work together with college supervisors must help student teachers find ways to share their subject knowledge that is interesting to a wide range of students (Cobb, 1988:87).

2.5.2 Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Assessment Knowledge and Skills is used and improved

The practicum provides a sequential set of experiences wherein student teachers enter into guided observations of schools and classrooms and trial their growing knowledge of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Student teachers must appreciate that teaching is not a gift that some are born with. Kalantsis and Cope (2012) state that learning is made and done through complex relationships, and that teaching requires knowledge and skills that are gained through practice.

2.5.3 Communities of Learning and Practice are developed

Following its first use by Jean Lave in 1991, the notion of 'communities of practice' was further developed to become a touchstone concept across many professions (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Wenger and his associates indicated that learning to teach is participation in the communities of practice in which knowledge is located and created. Wenger defined communities of practice as "groups of people who share a concern or a love for something they do and learn how to do it better as they routinely interact" (as cited in Pattalitan, 2016:695-700). Central to this view is the acceptance that all members (student teachers, placement school teachers and teacher educators) are learners who participate in developing their learning and creating knowledge. Teaching and learning are social activities built on collaborative educational relationships, roles and responsibilities with all becoming actively involved. The language of practice is constructed and reconstructed through mutual interaction and learning. Each plays some part in improving school practices continuously and engagingly.

2.5.4 Reflection on Instructional Strategies and Theories is encouraged

With roots going back to Dewey (1933) and drawing heavily on Schön's (1983, 1987) model, reflection has been a strategy used by teachers to reflect on their teaching in the last two decades. A growing body of research supports the positive influence of reflection on the quality of schools and the professional development of teachers (Moore-Russo & Wilsey, 2014). Student teachers, school mentor teachers and

college supervisors must understand the essence of reflection. Following the work of Schön (1987) in the *Reflective Practitioner,* the practicum is designed to develop student teachers' capacity for critical reflective practice. This research questions one's beliefs and practices and means that the practicum can be used as a platform to reflect on the theories learned in college, on teaching practices that have been used for many years (lesson planning, evaluation, every teaching routine), on one's beliefs about what teaching and learning are, and so on. A teacher could start by asking themselves how they view the students. Do I feel that all students can learn? Am I imposing facts on students? Am I developing students' thinking through my teaching? Are my students involved in learning? Do they think or memorise? Am I able to perform the required tasks? These are the most straightforward questions that a reflective practitioner teacher could pose. It must be underlined that reflection does not necessarily mean criticising a teacher or a classroom. Instead, it tries to analyse practice in light of one's teaching and learning theories and the science of teaching and learning. In a never-ending effort to get better at what they do, reflective teachers are not afraid to question their own beliefs and practices. The basis of reflection is questioning one's practice and ideas. It is important to remember that cooperating teachers and student teachers need to be explicitly taught how to reflect before they do it.

2.5.5   Engagement, Creativity and Intellectual Leadership is fostered

Teaching in new times requires creativity and innovation, as a requisite to building children's capacity for problem-based inquiry. Student teachers see the practicum as an opportunity to become engaged educators with their class, colleagues and community. Student teachers come to see themselves as teachers beyond the schoolyard perimeter. Teachers are public intellectuals and must be encouraged to build their capacity for critical engagement with colleagues, community stakeholders and their students. The practicum allows for challenging dominant theories and practices and building professional learning resources.

2.5.6 A Series of Opportunities to grow and learn in an Encouraging Environment

Cooperating teachers and college supervisors must present student teachers with challenges while scaffolding them to build student teachers' capacity and esteem. This emphasises the role of formative assessment for learning (Stobart, 2008; Wiliam, 2009:5-31). The practicum is not an add-on to the teacher preparation programme. Student teachers must not see it as a set of assessable tasks for course completion; the practicum offers real learning opportunities which puts pressure on teacher educators and cooperating teachers. It is not uncommon for the practicum to be shaped according to administrative requirements. To give students a real sense of what it is like to work and teach in schools, the practicum has to be well-organised and deal with problems that come up during development.

2.5.7 Sound Practices built on a Platform of Partnership and Shared Intelligence

The practicum operates as a cooperative venture between schools and colleges. Each partner should be afforded parity of esteem and trust to develop productive professional experiences for student teachers and optimise the future educational workforce for Ethiopia. Building this platform is not achieved through osmosis; it requires leadership and training (Osunde, 2015:1-5).

2.5.8 Building Student Confidence in a Professional Team

The practicum helps the student teacher feel more confident in his or her abilities as a professional worker on a team.

2.5.9 Intensive and Developmental Practice sessions

Administrative issues cannot compromise the duration of the practicum or its developmental steps.

2.5.10   Mentoring is vital

Mentoring needs to be a part of how school teachers advance in their careers (Allen, 2011:742-750).

2.5.11   Partnerships are crucial

Partnerships between schools and teacher-training institutions should aim to create schools that help teachers improve their skills (Bartholomew & Sandholtz, 2009:155-165; Loughran, 2006).

2.5.12   Accountability of the Roles and Responsibilities

Along with the roles and responsibilities, the practicum's framework should be consistent with the forthcoming section of this study. Failure to do so will result in inappropriate accountability issues.

2.5.13   The Practicum is a way to learn to become a Teacher

The study conducted as a basis for the development of this research showed that the practicum had been reduced to one of the structural requirements of graduation rather than a learning process for student teachers and mentors. The lack of commitment and understanding of how a practicum has to be organised and implemented has contributed to this reduction. Student teachers can make much of the practicum only when college leaders and educators value its essence (Loughran, 2006). Showing student teachers that the practicum is just an extra part of teacher training by being careless with how it is graded, how much time it takes and how it is organised is a waste of the country's limited financial resources and would lead to moral, ethical and professional accountability.

2.5.14   Feedback from Diverse Stakeholders is encouraged

The practicum needs to be informative and engaging for the student teachers. In the past, student teachers tend to have operated in a vacuum or isolation. With all its limitations, feedback from cooperating teachers and college supervisors has been very scarce. Student teachers need to attend conferences, seminars and different

reflection sessions if they want to learn how to teach and help improve the way things are done (Agudo, J., D.,M. 2016).

2.5.15 Stakeholders must be trained on how to implement the Practicum

Implementing the practicum with the traditional view and a lack of clarity about its basic ideas does not help teachers learn how to teach or improve their teaching skills (Fish, 1989).

2.5.16 The Principles and Practices acknowledge Student Diversity

The practicum offers student teachers an opportunity to apply the principles and practices of diversity to ensure that barriers are identified and dismantled. The interaction of schooling with various elements of a student's identity, such as religion, ethnicity, gender, disability, tribal affiliation, geographic location, poverty, displacement through war or natural disaster (the list is not exhaustive), may lead to exclusion. Students should recognise student diversity as an opportunity for learning and building stronger communities (Loughran: 2006).

2.5.17 Student Competence in Teaching Students with Disabilities

The practicum builds on knowledge and skills gained by students in the common core of inclusive education in Ethiopian primary schools. As stated by Lawson (2006) to the goals of Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol (2006:563) and the directions of the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (2012) in the Special Needs/Inclusive Education Programme Strategy, the practicum provides an opportunity for student teachers to build disability awareness and transform schools into inclusive communities for students with disabilities to share in excellent educational experiences. The guiding principles are indicated diagrammatically in the figure below with the next section discussing the theoretical and practical reasons for putting the pre-service practicum into place.

Boxes connected to the central "Practicum principles" circle:

- Promotes reflections on teaching practice and theories
- Fosters engagement, creativity and intellectual leadership
- Developmental challenges in an environment of engagement and support for improvement
- Sound practicums are built on a platform of partnership and shared intelligence
- Develops communities of learning and practice
- The practicum principles and practices acknowledge student diversity
- Apply and develop knowledge and skills in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment
- The practicum encouraged feedback from diverse stakeholders
- Applies, develop and expands disciplines knowledge through engagement
- The practicum is based up on the principles of practices of inclusive education

(Source: Desta, 2022)

Figure 2.4: Practicum principles

2.6 THEORETICAL EVIDENCE ON THE MAJOR PRINCIPLES FOR THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRACTICUM

Literature and educational theory show that the practicum would work best if it were based on certain practices and principles. While the following qualities by and large depend on the features of effective teacher education programmes identified by Darling-Hammond (2006b:300-314), additional evidence gathered in the area of student teaching has been included in the review. Indeed, the features identified here reflect a wider consensus on what characterises an effective practicum and how it should be structured in teacher education programmes.

2.6.1 Integration of Field Experience with College Theoretical Courses

Citing Graham (2006:1118-1129) and Guyton and Rainer (2002), it has been said that field experiences should be more cohesive, have more explicit curricular definitions, and appear more integrated with other parts of teacher training.

According to Goodnough et al. (2009:285-296), practicums used to be organised at the end or middle of the programme to practice the theory learned in professional and subject didactic courses. This view has been named the 'application theory perspective'. Another significant issue is the lack of an integrated programme philosophy of teaching and learning that ties together the practicum and campus courses (Beck & Kosnick, 2002:81–98; Darling-Hammond, 1999:26). Because of these traditions and the traditional separation between what teacher educators teach and do and what schools do, Darling-Hammond (2009, in Zeichner, 2010:91) has called the lack of connections between teacher education course work and field experiences the "Achilles heel of teacher education programmes".

However, in recent times, based on evidence from effective teacher education programmes, efforts have been directed toward integrating theory and practice throughout the teacher education programme (Gursoy, 2013; Jush, 2013; Trent, 2010). Part of that is integrating field experience and the practicum across the whole teacher education programme within the various courses. Project work for student teachers is necessary to help them learn how to teach in schools in practice and from practice (Zeichner, 2010:88-99).

Moreover, as cooperating teachers are held responsible for the practical aspect of teaching, it is helpful to base the development of teacher education courses on actual school contexts and involve teachers in planning what to teach and how it is to be taught at the campus level (Goodnough et al. 2016). The integration of school practices and school-based knowledge in college courses can be facilitated by the presence of school teachers as assistants and instructors. This connection is not solely reliant on field experiences. Additionally, subject method courses offered on college campuses can be partially taught in actual school settings, allowing for observations and reflections to be integrated into mediated instruction and field experiences.

Literatures evidence indicates that when practicum/field experiences are closely integrated with the campus courses mentioned above, teacher educators and mentors are more effective in preparing competent teachers. Student teachers will also better understand teaching practices based on theory and practice (Zeichner, 2010:88-99).

2.6.2 Collaborative Partnerships between Schools and Colleges: Professional Development Schools

Literature on teacher education indicates that a college-school partnership is a critical feature for practicum success and the adequate preparation of teacher education students (Baumfield & Butterworth, 2007; Betlem, Clary, & Jones, 2019; Callahan & Martin, 2007; Halasz, 2020; McLaughlin, 2006; Reischl, Khasnabis, & Karr, 2017; Tsui & Law, 2007; Zeichner, 2006a; Zeichner, 2010).

Based on the context-dependent nature of professional learning, the need to bridge the theory-practice divide in teacher education programmes, insights gained from school-based teacher education programmes, and the different geographical locations of various stakeholders involved in the preparation of teachers, the issue of college-school partnership and collaboration, induction, and internship has become a well-established element of teacher education programmes. Osunde (2015:1–5) stated that the formation of well-designed, field-based teacher education that benefits mentors as much as neophytes and college instructors as teachers arises from the collaboration of colleges and schools in pre-service teacher education programmes.

In light of this, schools are vital partners in training teachers. Some of the teacher training must take place at schools. There are very good explanations for this. Those who give it some thought realise that one cannot just acquire theoretical concepts and then use them in practice to learn the intricate practical activities of classroom teaching. In fact, the only place where one can truly understand what it means to be a school teacher is in a classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2017). School experience is essential to understanding which concepts are viable, how to implement them and

under what circumstances a given viewpoint is beneficial. Furthermore, only in schools can a novice gain from the knowledge of school teaching as it is only used in those settings. The best places to learn how to teach in the real world are in schools and from teachers (Reischl, Khasnabis, & Karr, 2017).

It is important to pay close attention to the quality of field-based programmes, ensuring that participants have access to learning opportunities that expose them to desirable and excellent practices. As a result of the urgent need to update the teacher education practicum, schools and teacher education settings are now coming closer together. Roles and responsibilities are being combined and reorganised in a clear attempt to get rid of the artificial separation that was in place and replace it with real collaboration between tertiary teacher educators and the school (Paker, 2008).

Through mutually constructed learning communities, this reshaping will create an environment intended to link what students learn about teaching from their field-based school experiences with what they learn from their college or university experiences (Halasz, 2016). This will lead to opportunities that are different and better than what the school or college/university can offer on their own. According to this idea, teacher educators want to do more than just teach students how to teach; they want to teach students how to keep learning in a variety of school settings by making the effects of school and college/university last longer and be stronger (Betlem, Clary, & Jones, 2019).

As in the case of the Ethiopian teacher education programmes, a strong partnership has been proposed to increase quality, bridge the gap between theory and practice and improve communication between colleges/universities and schools. Cooperation should emerge due to shared interests between the school and the teacher education institution. The college/university should be interested in bridging the gap between theory and practice, increasing linkages. The school should want to amass a group of people who want to become teachers and build a relationship in which both sides benefit (Varela & Desiderio, 2021).

Therefore, citing the area of partnerships, Tang (2003:483-498) summarised four different forms of school-college partnerships: the Uni-dimensional, Cooperation, Collaboration and Professional Development. All forms of association are included in the School Concept. These models entail other forms of interaction and roles among school mentor teachers, student teachers and college supervisors. The functions of schools and teacher education programmes also vary, as does the partnership. In the uni-dimensional model, schools serve as simple student placements without the active involvement of school teachers. College supervisors pay a visit infrequently. In the complementary model (cooperation), cooperating teachers and college supervisors are involved in student teachers' professional learning. However, there is systematic dialogue or interaction between the two. Cooperating teachers and college supervisors keep an eye on student teachers, but there is no such thing as a triadic conference or seminar.

In the collaborative partnership model, schools are hugely involved in planning and implementing students' field experiences and courses offered by universities and colleges. Triadic interaction is frequent, and the division between theory and practice is narrowed as school teachers are involved in teaching education courses and mentoring student teachers. The professional development school model extends the collaborative model's interaction to communities of learning. The partnership is conceptualised as a means for students' field experience, an opportunity for professional development of mentors, and collaboration of university/college staff and teachers in research and school improvement activities. According to its mission statement, Callahan and Martin (2007:6) characterised professional development schools as "new forms of school-college alliances intended to simultaneously reinvent schools and teacher preparation programmes". To help students learn, schools need to be reorganised, and at the same time, they need to be brought back to life to support the training and growth of experienced teachers.

Hence, a dynamic and concerted collaboration between schools and colleges in the form of a professional development school is necessary to sustain change efforts in the preparation of teachers and bring change to the practice of school teachers (Bartholomew & Sandholtz, 2009:155-165; Halasz, 2020). Darling-Hammond (2009)

states that the goal of professional development schools is to bring about change in both schools and teacher education programmes by helping both pre-service and in-service teachers learn.

2.6.3 Close Supervision, Support and Challenges for Student Teachers and Roles and Responsibilities for the Triads

One of the most challenging and defining elements in the effectiveness of the partnership is the development of clear stakeholder responsibility (Ambrosetti, Dekkers, & Knight, 2017; Humberd & Rouse, 2016; Lee, Lee, & Arifah Drajati, 2019). All parties involved must be aware of and understand the roles and responsibilities of the 'triad' (student teachers, mentors, and college/university supervisors) (Allen, 2011:742-750).

The learning potential of such circumstances is quite significant if the roles are clear. The practicum needs to incorporate activities that are challenging for the students (Garza, Reynosa, Werner, Duchaine, & Harter, 2019). Tang (2003:483-498) says that this needs to be paired with the right kind of support from mentors and teacher educators. Here, I have to indicate briefly the expected roles of each of the key stakeholders, beginning with student teacher roles.

2.6.3.1 The student teacher

Vallejo, Estrella, and López-Barajas (2019) identify the role of student teachers as the most important one. He has identified the following:

- When it makes sense, plan lessons, work in small groups, do parts of the tasks, and so forth.
- They should internalise constructive criticism and feedback and use this to develop their teaching.
- Attend peer reflection meetings led by the school mentor, as well as all lessons and conferences involving actual classroom activities.
- Attend all of the school's events in full.
- They think deeply about what they have learned.

- During their time in school practice, they must follow all policies and guidelines set forth by the school.

2.6.3.2 The supervisor at the university/college

(Beck and Kosnik, 2002:6-19; Nkambule & Mukeredzi, 2017) indicate that instructors frequently devote little importance to course instruction and practicum supervision because universities and colleges place much more value on graduate study, research and publication than on pre-service education. Koerner et al. (2002:35-58) indicated that university/college supervisors are usually marginalised in the triad interaction. It happens to be the case that university or college instructors prioritise research and teaching in graduate programmes. In contrast, student teaching supervision has been seen as the job of doctoral students and retired staff members of universities (Barahona, 2019).

University or college supervisors convey the values and beliefs of teacher education programmes in the practicum process (Donovan, M., & Cannon, S. 2018). Indeed, compared to student teachers and cooperating teachers, university/college supervisors emphasise teaching and learning principles and practices during a triadic conversation, demonstrating their significant role in knowledge generation Richardson, (Dann, Dann, & O'Neill, 2017; Dann, 2018).

After analysing the different models of teacher training programmes in other countries Pungur (2007:267-282) concluded that the role of the university/college facilitator is as a liaison, communicator, evaluator, and resource person for the student-teacher. To sum up, the Ethiopian primary school practicum guideline document (2011:25) outlines the following roles of teacher educators:

- Get ready for the first day of classes for student teachers.
- Throughout the course, supervise, assess, and practically assist student teachers.
- Evaluate student performance in accordance with each cycle's agreements.
- After one day of observation, provide both written and oral feedback.

- Schedule supervision meetings with the student teacher and mentor at least twice while they are in the practicum. This has to be done in the middle and end of the practicum in order to support students' learning.

2.6.3.3 The cooperating or school mentor teacher

Mentors or cooperating teachers are expected to play orientation, planning and evaluation roles (Grimmett & Ratzlaff, 1986:41-50). Cooperating teachers must inform student teachers on school rules and regulations, routines and daily practices; involve students in planning their lessons and acquaint them with feedback provisions; evaluate one's instruction; assess students' evaluation; and reflect on teaching practices (Chizhik, Chizhik, Close, & Gallego, 2017; Molotja & Maruma, 2018). Clarke (2006:910-921) indicated that cooperating teachers mainly play an advisory role with different levels of peculiarities and assist students in reflecting on their practices; however, they did suggest that cooperating teachers could play both.

Graham (2006:1118-1199) indicated that the two most critical components for the success of student teaching are cooperating teachers and the sites where the student teachers are practising. According to Nguyen (2009:655-662) and Pungar (2007:267-282), cooperating teachers have a greater influence on student teachers than college supervisors and courses combined. This happens when the cooperating teachers are motivated and own the preparation of teachers as their work. If cooperating teachers were not interested in or good at the new ways of teaching, mentees would not learn much, if anything, and would stop using the methods they learned in campus courses (Kolman, Roegman, & Goodwin, 2017; Reese, 2016).

Beck and Kosnik (2000:207-224) reported that cooperating teachers are expected to have two significant roles, although evidence indicates that they emphasise the apprenticeship role in working with student teachers. The critical interventionist model and the practical initiation model are the two roles in question. In the former case, the apprenticeship conception of teaching, whereby student teachers are introduced to the routines of teaching where mentors guide students to teaching practices that are readily available. In the latter, mentors (associate teachers) are

expected to assist and guide students in reflecting on practice and examining the interface between teacher education theory and school practice. They suggested changing the way teaching and learning are done by moving away from the apprenticeship approach and toward a more critical one.

Sampson and Yeomans (2019:62-75) reviewed best practices and summed up the role of mentors into three dimensions. These include structural (working throughout the school as a student placement planner, organiser, negotiator, and inductor), supporting (working with the student as a host, friend, and counsellor) and expert (working with the student as a trainer, educator and assessor).

2.6.3.4   The role of the college practicum coordination team

The college practicum coordination team serves as a link between the college and the partner schools and is responsible for the following duties (Chou, 2019; Grimmett, Forgasz, Williams, & White, 2018);

- Serving as a facilitator of a collaborative partnership with the college about student teacher placement;
- Organising and controlling the facilitation of practitioner support during the practicum;
- Making sure that mentors, tutors, and student teachers are well informed about the requirements and responsibilities of the practicum programme which includes inducting student-teachers into the school and facilitating and monitoring their progress in the partner school and college (MOE, 2011:23).

2.6.4   Students Teachers, School Mentors and College Supervisors as Learning Communities of Practice

Rooted in the underlying notion of 'communities of practice' and the contextually dependent nature of professional learning, student teachers are given the opportunity to develop knowledge, skills and dispositions as part of a larger community of educators and co-learners in actual school contexts and colleges. Wenger et al. (2004, in Goodnough et al., 2009:286), indicated that communities of practice are "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion

about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis"(Lave, J. 1991; Lave, J., & Wenger, E. 1998). The practicum should be seen as a place for student-teachers, mentors, college supervisors and other interested parties to learn through methods like collaborative action research, peer coaching, co-teaching, dialogue, portfolios and reflection sessions (Ambrosetti, Knight & Dekkers 2013).

Zeichner (2002:61) also indicated that the inquiry-oriented or research-based would be realised when we "think more broadly about schools and communities as places for learning to teach and not just about individual classrooms". Supervisors at colleges have to work closely with schools, and teachers at schools have to teach college courses as part of a team.

In general, the hierarchical relationships between university/college supervisors, mentors and student teachers that characterised the traditional conceptualisation of teaching practice have been substituted by the notion of co-learning through mutual reflection and construction of knowledge and practice (Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008). Hence, student teachers are part and parcel of a community of learners who are expected to guide their practice through reflection and co-learning rather than simple modelling. When such understanding prevails among the triads, then learning communities are enhanced.

2.6.5 Placement of Students in Innovative Schools and Diverse Settings

Another decisive factor in the success of the practicum implementation is the placement of students in various schools. Due to different logistical problems and a quest for convenience, student placement traditionally marginalises the school's suitability for their learning. Evidence indicates that students need to be placed in innovative schools; students need to be informed that they have to consider school-related issues rather than focus on classrooms, placements should offer multicultural or diverse settings for student teachers and arrangements have to be made in an orderly and developmental manner (Darling-Hammond, 2006:300-314; Zeichner,

1992:296-307). Beck and Kosnik (2000:208) used Goodlad's (1998) quote to show how important placement is in figuring out how much students learn:

> Several questions are raised by 'more student teaching' or 'apprenticeship with a mentor.' Do we want future teachers to be more knowledgeable about existing school-based teaching methods? Recent studies on educational procedures seem to support the exact opposite... More field-based experiences for teachers are most likely to be useful if there is close supervision, a critical look at how things are done now, and, in the end, residency in the model, which revitalises schools.

2.6.6 Peer-to-Peer Practicum Support/Feedback

Teacher education has also recently experienced the idea of peer coaching (Lu, 2010:748). Peer coaching is a mutually helpful connection between two co-workers, according to Neubert and McAllister (1993 in Lu, 2010:748). Research indicates that pre-service teachers tend to isolate themselves and be focused simply on practising rather than sharing ideas with peers (Manchishi & Mwanza, 2016). To promote the professional development of student teachers and lay the foundation for reflection, innovative teacher education programmes have introduced peer-based practicums (Feiman-Nemser, 2001:1013-1055; Manouchehri, 2002:715-737; Nokes et al., 2008:2168-2177). Peer discourse, peer observation and peer feedback are all ways in which student teachers interact with their peers (Lu, 2010:748-753).

Manouchehri (2002) indicated that student teachers involved in a peer-based practicum, with the support of the school and college tutors, reported significant gains in identifying gaps in their professional knowledge and practice. It also contributed to a better understanding of the content they teach and collaborative planning and analysis of teaching practices (Adu-Yeboah & Yaw Kwaah, 2018). Nokes et al. (2008) reported that student teachers involved in paired placements experienced more tension than teachers placed in a single station. When properly managed by the mentors, the pressure in the paired arrangement has led to more

dialogue and reflection between the student-teacher, which is one primary purpose of the practicum (Nokes et al., 2008). In addition, student teachers in paired placements demonstrated a collaborative culture during and after the practicum, and students in actual classrooms also gained better learning. However, such an arrangement has its limitations as well. Lu (2010) indicated that student teachers' observation skills, time planning, workload and structuring of peer observation are some of the challenges that face peer coaching. Student teachers may lack the experience of individual planning and presentation that they will need later in actual teaching practices (Kilic, 2016). Students in schools may also face problems coping with diverse student teachers simultaneously. In line with this, Nokes et al. (2008) revealed that mentors have to do a lot to deal with tensions and disagreements between student teachers.

2.6.7   Practicum and Reflective Practice

Pre-service teachers should frequently reflect during their practicums because it lays the groundwork for reflective practice in their future teaching careers. Reflection is a "critical" tool for pre-service teachers because it helps them "combine theoretical knowledge with practice, develop critical thinking skills, and come up with answers that best fit unexpected situations" (Armutcu & Yaman, 2010:34; Camburn, & Han, 2017; Mathew et al., 2017). All of these things are important parts of teachers' intellectual and professional development.

Because reflective practice is a recent idea in the Ethiopian teacher education programme and is closely associated with the practicum, it is appropriate to briefly synthesise its purpose and rationale. Student teachers and teachers who teach in universities or colleges spend much time planning activities and writing reports that help them grow as professionals and support the idea of reflective practitioners.

As indicated in the previous section, field experiences are not only meant for relating theory and practice and developing teaching skills in students. Such a view of field experiences has severely limited the value that can be extracted from them (Zeichner, 2010:89-99). Based on the view that field experiences give opportunities

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to learn in and from practice, reflective practice has been associated with the practicum since the 1990s (Zeichner, 1990:105-132). According to Zeichner (1983) and Schön (1983), work has demonstrated that solving problems in the teaching profession and others requires more than simply applying theory to practice – teaching should be a reflective practice. But this has been hard to do because of how narrowly people have interpreted the ideas of reflective practice and learning through reflection (Ziechner, 1992:296-307).

Zeichner identified some significant problems that hinder the proper conceptualisation of reflective practice in teacher education programmes. One major issue is equating reflective practice with student teachers' application of research-based teaching practices by marginalising theories and expertise rooted in their personal beliefs and practices. Zeichner characterised this orientation as a version of the social efficiency approach, as student teachers' practices are seen as an extension of theories. The dichotomy of theory and practice, as represented through teacher education courses, field experiences in schools and theory guiding practice, is a flawed concept of reflective practice. Zeichner indicated that there should be a dialectical or "dialogic" relationship between theory and practice in reflection. Hence, in reflective practice, student teachers' and mentors' theories of practice — what is practice and actual practice will be the main subject matters to be studied and used as sources of teacher professional development. The second major misconception related to reflective practice is associating it with 'means-end thinking' by solely focusing student teachers on technical teaching activities and specific classroom issues. Student teachers have to analyse problems related to teaching strategies from a broader perspective by considering curriculum, educational objectives and socio-cultural issues. The ethical, cultural, whole-school and overall cultural dimensions of schooling need to be used as a basis for reflection and change. Thirdly, reflection succeeds when viewed as a process of building learning communities of practice rather than a solely individualistic action. While student teachers benefit from individual reflection to some degree, the improvement of actual school practices and teachers' professional needs requires them to consider reflection a 'social practice'. Zeichner (1992:300) said, "If we want real teacher

development during the practicum, we must integrate student teachers into a community of teachers who have a big impact on how school environments are made".

Hence, the development of teaching professionalism requires more than rational technical models, as professionals need to recognise the "complexity, unpredictability, instability, uniqueness, and value-conflict" (Schön, 1983:39) of a work environment and frame and reframe their practice. As cited in Wilson and l'Anson (2006:353-361), Schön's conception of the practicum is more than applying theory to practice. As in Schön's concept, practice is what composes the curriculum of the practicum. Schön came up with two types of reflection in teaching based on this: reflection in action and reflection on action.

Reflection-in-action is the term used to describe the thinking that occurs while teachers do something. They constantly reinterpret difficult situations in light of the knowledge they gain through acting and doing 'on-the-spot experiments' to make things better. In this situation, reflection helps teachers reshape their actions while they are taking them. Contrarily, reflection-on-action refers to thinking in hindsight on a challenging scenario and one's reflections while acting on those situations (Zeichner, 1990:114-115). Zeichner (1990) came to the conclusion that a research-based practicum helps and encourages teachers and student teachers to look into both the theory and practice of teaching and learning.

Since the seminal works of Dewey and Schön on reflective practice, much has been written on how teachers and student teachers can develop the skill of reflective practice. Moreover, features that pave the way for reflective practice, such as action research, have become integral parts of teacher education programmes, particularly field experiences. Different methods and steps of reflection have been developed by various scholars in the field. Dewey, Schön, and van Manen have identified different approaches to reflection whereby teachers must question, experiment and reason out, trigger, frame and reframe, uncover assumptions and test diverse practices (Hoban & Hasting, 2006:1007). Common to all the different approaches is to "offer ways of questioning taken-for-granted assumptions and encourage one to see their

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practice through others' eyes" Loughran (2002, in Hoban & Hasting, 2006:1007). In general, teachers and student teachers can develop reflection through addressing the views of others about teaching and learning, questioning the place of a theory in teaching and learning, examining their practice through case studies, autobiographies, and action research and undertaking research with their students (Hoban & Hasting, 2006:1006–1019). In doing so, student teachers and teachers are expected to develop effective teaching strategies and higher reasoning skills, improve efficacy in solving problems, examine their practice, assumptions, and beliefs about teaching and create meaningful and dynamic professionalism (Chitpin, Simon & Galipeau, 2008:2049-2058).

2.7   SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The importance of a practicum in the teaching and learning process has been widely acknowledged by scholars who have conducted extensive research in various educational fields. The primary purpose of this chapter was to show the theoretical framework that guided this study. As a result, this study is grounded in the Vygotskian social constructivist theory of learning. If the practicum is expected to contribute to changing school teaching culture and teachers' misconceptions about teaching, it will focus on effective theoretical and practical principles to change teaching practice, develop functional teaching skills, and develop valuable values among school students, teacher trainees, and college or university supervisors. The design and implementation of the training should take these principles into account. All stakeholders' actions and responsibilities should be considered under these principles.

In addition, the practicum bases its primary function on reflection on teaching practices and theories. For this purpose, teacher trainees, school mentors, and college supervisors need to understand the concept of reflection, which can be seen as doubtful, questioning, examining, or scrutinising our beliefs and actions. Practice, therefore, is a way for us to take a closer look at the theories learned in college, the teaching methods used in the past (such as the curriculum design, assessment, and all routine activities), and our beliefs about learning and teaching. Teachers can start

a conversation by asking themselves what they think about the students. For example, asking the following questions: Do I believe all my students can learn? Am I imposing facts on my students? Am I developing my students' intelligence through my teaching methods? Do my students think or memorise? Am I able to do what is expected of me? These and other questions should be asked by a teacher about her or his work. It should be emphasised that reflection does not necessarily mean criticising teachers or the curriculum. Instead, it attempts to analyse and test practices by comparing teaching and learning theories with the fundamental theories of science and education. The basic idea of reflection is to question one's actions and beliefs. It is essential to ensure that placement school teachers and teacher trainees are trained in reflection before participating in the process. Finally, the chapter explored the significant challenges faced while implementing the practicum. In the next chapter, I explained the pre-service practicum experiences in global, national, and local contexts.

CHAPTER THREE
PRE-SERVICE PRACTICUM IN THE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME

3.1   INTRODUCTION

This section of the study explores the practicum implementations of global, national and local contexts citing studies based on the experiences of school mentors, teacher educators and student teachers in different countries. In this process, the professional characteristics and skills of various counsellors and university/college supervisors are identified. The discussion is also based on the critical analysis of how the current practicum is being used in Ethiopia, more specifically at Hossana College of Teacher Education, the role of different partners in preparing teachers, the professional qualities and skills of college supervisors, the organisation of conferences and other related topics. Lessons are analysed to gain insights into the teacher education programmes in general and teaching practicums in particular, which were included in this study. To lay a foundation, the first section discusses how the teacher education programme fits into the philosophical and theoretical ideas of positivists and constructivists.

3.2   SUMMARY OF TEACHER EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY (POSITIVIST VS CONSTRUCTIVIST)

According to Kimball (2013), teacher education programmes' philosophical and theoretical grounds stem from both a liberal and a professional arts tradition. The liberal arts tradition assumes that education is liberal. The idea is to develop an inquiring or reflective mindset in college students through academic expert knowledge. It focuses on learning about great works of art by great artists and great minds and being enlightened by them.

In contrast, the professional school's model assumes that educational learning and development are connected more directly to real-life problems. As described elsewhere, college-based teacher training is criticised for relying too much on theory

or being remote from practice. This is presumably because teaching is 'situated knowledge', which is inextricably located within its acquirer's physical and social context. I argue that complete dependency on one and ignoring the other does not help the learner develop his full potential. Attempts should be made towards some appropriate balance.

Thus, the rationale and purpose of teacher education is influenced by what is thought to be the nature of teaching or being a teacher and the perception of the relationship between theory and practice. Inevitably, the answers to these issues will shape the process of learning to teach. As a result, two opposing theoretical stances exist, representing the opposing epistemologies of positivism and constructivism, and explaining the rationales, purposes and techniques of learning to teach (Ültanir, 2012:122).

3.2.1   The Positivist Viewpoint

This view argues that anybody can teach. Successful teaching is more likely to be explained by prior knowledge, aptitude and background traits than by training. It says that teaching is part of the behavioural sciences and that it can be studied, tested and analysed scientifically (Ültanir, 2012:122).

According to such viewpoints, teacher education is characterised by using a transmission-based method of teaching and learning where knowledge or facts are predominantly deposited and retained by passive students. Freire (1993) calls this 'the banking concept of education', in which education is suffering from 'narrative sicknesses'. For Freire, the relationship between the teacher and the student is expressed as the narrating subject (the teacher) and the patient listening object (the students). This way of thinking about the practicum is based on the idea that the goal is to put the theories learned at the teacher education school into practice.

Proponents of such views, as suggested by Freire (1993), believe that educational theory can consist of hard facts. These hard facts serve as a prescription for classroom practice, the approach could provide the necessary knowledge and, in turn, awareness of that knowledge would give a high level of certainty for deciding on

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the proper technique. To Fish (1989), this way of learning to teach is seen as a simple process of working as an apprentice with an experienced teacher or with a supervisor. The student-teacher is left to learn by 'osmosis' from the practice of teaching.

3.2.2   The Constructivist Perspective

The problems and criticisms of the transmission model have led to the development of the reflective approach, which values the art and science of teaching, the full and active participation of student teachers, and the mentor's support, challenge and vision (Torrance, 2012:326; Ültanir, 2012:122).

This is a much broader and deeper conception of learning to teach, based on the view that teaching is a very complex and uncertain process. It views teaching as involving a massive range of knowledge, dispositions, decision-making capabilities, skills and capacities of organisation and management (Fish, 1989). Within this complexity, a teacher can only learn how to teach or improve their professional practice by developing their theories or principles through Schön's processes of reflection, inactivity (during it), and activity (after it) (Schön, 1983).

According to Schön, teachers can make moral and intelligent decisions by reflecting on their work. It focuses on enhancing teachers' self-awareness, capacity to analyse instructional conditions, and comprehension of the significance of events in their classroom and school. Besides, reflection on practice involves being objectively critical of one's work without being destructive or unduly harmful (Oakland, 2012:123; Swiderski, 2011:240-243). For advocators of this view, learning to teach is not something that can be learned through prescribed procedures. There are not any straightforward formulas or rules that guarantee success when followed religiously and frequently. Instead, learning to teach has to be practised as situated learning (Ramsden, 2003), where the situation produces knowledge directly through activity. This view is based mainly on constructivist psychology and partly on philosophy (Fosnot, 1996:30; Gordon, 2009:738). With this background, the next section moves on to discuss the philosophical models for school placement.

3.3   MODELS OF SCHOOL PLACEMENT

Pre-service teachers have had the opportunity to gain classroom experience for much of the last century as the practicum component of teacher education programmes has been used as an apprenticeship training programme (Yan, C. & He, C., 2010). Learning to teach now occurs in two steps as a result of separating the fieldwork experience from the academic teaching research over time (Fieman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996:63-91). This means that pre-service teachers begin their career with studies in education to learn the fundamentals of schools and teaching. They then put their knowledge into practice while working in a classroom during their school placement.

This method of teaching preparation is currently viewed as being too narrowly focused and unsuitable for developing the knowledge and abilities that twenty-first-century educators need (Caldwell, 2006:2016). It is recommended that teachers have more extensive professional development experience to prepare them for working in both schools and their communities (Education and Training Committee, 2005). Pre-service teachers must know what it is like to work in a classroom and actively create learning experiences that teach, learn and apply pedagogical theory at the same time.

One of the issues in teacher education is how instructional theory and placement experience are related. While preparing successful beginning teachers is the main objective, how this is accomplished and the programme goals that go along with it, depends on the philosophical perspective on education and schooling that higher education institutions have taken for their programme design. It seems likely that these differences will have an effect on the kinds of placement experiences and learning goals for each programme.

In this regard, the literature discusses numerous philosophical school placement models (frameworks) used to develop teacher preparation programmes. Four philosophical school placement models can be used which include the collaborative

or partnership model, the self-reflective model, the academic or clinical instruction model or the knowledge-based and pedagogically-centred model.

These four philosophical school placement models and what makes them different are described below.

3.3.1   The Partnership or Collaborative Learning Model

This model strongly emphasises including future teachers in joint learning activities with academic and school personnel. Placements are made through negotiations that take into account the needs of the school and the ability of the future teachers to help students grow and be creative in the classroom. Partnership models have sparked a debate about whether or not pre-service teachers have the skills and knowledge of educational theory to help with the school's future development work (Haugaløkken & Ramberg, 2007:55-69).

Inconsistencies in the formulation of this framework and the standard of communication required between providers and schools to meet the programme's objectives are further issues that raise concerns (Boz & Boz, 2006:353–368; Hastings & Squires, 2002:79–91; Philpott, Hoult, Katene & Sears, 2002). The collaborative learning model or partnership models' primary objective is to include teacher candidates in collaborative learning activities with practicing educators and instructors. The pre-service teacher's ability to help schools grow and change is taken into account when negotiating supervised teaching experiences. The school's needs are also taken into account.

3.3.2   The Reflective Model

This model is concerned with fostering a capacity for reflective activity in professionals. This model states that practicum experiences should be structured to encourage a reflective learning approach (Ryan, Toohey & Hughes, 1996:355-377) so that pre-service teachers can connect their placement experiences to the theoretical knowledge they have learned during the programme. Schön's original definition from 1983 was about pre-service teachers who play the role of the

reflective practitioner and can draw conclusions about learning and teaching outcomes from how they structure and carry out their teaching practice (Ottesen, 2007:31-46).

Pre-service teachers use this paradigm to plan, teach and assess their development as practitioners. Schools give pre-service teachers the chance to create and work toward their teaching development goals and teachers who supervise them, offer reflective feedback to help them gauge their success. The reflective process seems to work best when the teaching frameworks used in school placement and other parts of the programme are the same (Ottesen, 2007:31-46). In a nutshell, the reflective model emphasises strengthening the ability to engage in reflective practice. Thanks to the supervised teaching experiences, teachers-to-be can draw conclusions and connect what they have learned in the classroom with what they have learned on the job.

3.3.3   The Academic or Clinical Teacher Education Model

The practical and academic components of teacher education have undergone significant revision due to the current agenda of Teachers for a New Era (TNE) in the United States (Carnegie Foundation, 2001). TNE shows teaching as a job that is both taught in school and practised in the real world. These schools actively assist pre-service teachers' clinically focused education by supplying the best instructors possible. Unlike what was thought to be possible in the past for teacher education programmes, the clinical approach to preparing teachers requires more time spent in schools and a stronger relationship between the school and the higher education provider.

The extended practicum's main objective is to give future teachers the time they need to assess and analyse the growth and learning of their students, as well as to create more personalised teaching strategies and learn intervention techniques. Little study evidence has yet been found about the impact of this paradigm on pre-service teachers' learning outcomes. In general, a better connection between the provider and the schools, as well as more excellent experience working in schools, is

needed for the clinical model that is academically taught. With the help of specialist instructors who support clinically-oriented education and the extended practicum, teachers-to-be can improve their ability to look at and evaluate student growth and learning and come up with more personalised ways to teach.

3.3.4   The Model of Pedagogical Content Knowledge

This model utilises the conceptual foundation for instruction created by Shulman (1986:4-14; 1987:1-22). Teaching knowledge is seen by Shulman (1987:1-22) as having a variety of interconnected facets. His category of 'pedagogical content knowledge' shows how teachers have a unique way of putting together content and pedagogy, as well as a unique way of understanding knowledge.

Teachers' familiarity with the curriculum, general pedagogy, students, educational environments, objectives, purposes and values are expanded and reinforced. According to Shulman's research, the teaching profession needs a knowledge foundation that develops and improves to enhance classroom instruction. Programmes for teacher preparation that support this viewpoint emphasise teaching students how to organise elements of subject knowledge to adapt and portray them for instruction. This model, therefore, emphasises the connection between pedagogy and topic matter. The model integrates content and pedagogy to better comprehend how certain subject-matter aspects are organised, modified and represented for instruction. It pertains to the information needed to teach effectively in a subject area.

Taking the above discussion into consideration, the next section looks at the best teaching practicum experiences around the world.

3.4   THE TEACHING PRACTICUM EXPERIENCE

The term "teaching practicum" refers to preparing future teachers for the classroom through hands-on experience (Al-Mahrooqi, 2011:71-81; Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2007; Nwanekezi, Okoli & Mezieobi, 2011:41-46). When student teachers complete internships, they are exposed to various experiences while working in classrooms and schools (Marais & Meier, 2004). It is the programme's most significant and

pertinent component for pre-service teachers. Primary elements of teacher preparation programmes include practicum courses and other field-based activities (Palmer, 1995; Richards & Farrell, 2011). Along with sufficient academic background and strong motivation, teaching requires solid pedagogical abilities. A student teacher must receive the essential training to develop the necessary skills.

University or college settings are used to conduct pre-service teacher education programmes. The placement of student teachers in elementary or secondary schools that offer practicum opportunities is necessary for this, but it is not possible without assigning student teachers to primary or secondary schools that offer practicum opportunities (Russell, 2006:83–96). This shows that in order to give potential teachers effective teaching programmes, teacher education institutions need to work closely with school communities. This view is supported by the statement made by Wellman and Wold (2006:54-61) that "the collaborative nature of university/college and school cooperation fosters comprehensive breakthroughs in teacher preparation programmes and a curriculum that flows seamlessly from theory to practice."

Therefore, it is essential for universities, colleges, and schools to collaborate with local schools in order to successfully bridge theory and practice. This could eventually result in changes to the curriculum and teacher preparation programmes (Darling-Hammond, 2010:35–47). This is because theory and practice are the two main parts of a teacher training programme. Colleges provide theoretical instruction, while practicum placement schools offer hands-on training. So, in order for the practicum programme to reach its goal, the college tutors and school teachers (mentors) must work together and agree on the process.

In addition to helping the student-teacher acquire competency, a practicum focuses on bridging the gap between theory and practice in education. Through a programme of cooperative and interactive coaching, the student-teacher learns valuable teaching and management techniques from experienced instructors, bridging the gap between educational theory and practice and raising the calibre of their instruction (Endeley, 2014:11). It is a planned school experience for student teachers, where they put their newly acquired abilities into practice while being closely supervised and assisted by

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a qualified teacher in the classroom. Participating in a practicum at a school gives future teachers the chance to improve their teaching and classroom skills, which is an important part of all teacher education programmes (Grootenboer, 2006:18-32).

Thus, the practicum programme's goal is to aid teacher candidates in acquiring and demonstrating the knowledge, abilities and perspectives necessary to succeed as master teachers. The practicum experience also helps trainee teachers "go beyond the memorization of knowledge to the application of ideas" in an actual classroom setting (Wickstrom et al., 2006:22–31). Trainee teachers can take part in this programmes educational activities, which include student-teacher interactions, lesson planning, pedagogical techniques, school-wide projects, and subject-matter-related problems (Fekede, 2009:37–61). In order to support the vision of the profession for which they are educating student teachers, teacher education programmes should demonstrate how teaching and learning should be conducted (Russell, 2004:89–103).

Szabo, Scott, and Yellin all agree that student teaching is essential for preparing future teachers by helping them connect theory and practice (2002:1–9). According to the research on practicum programmes, this is the most important part of any teacher training course since it allows future teachers to experience first-hand how their teaching methods might impact their students (Gustafson & Rowell, 1995; in Grootenboer, 2006:18–32). The practicum, which is also called school-based field experience, gives people who want to be teachers a chance to improve their teaching skills and gain experience in the classroom (Grooteboer, 2006:18-32).

Putting the teaching practicum into place is also essential for closing the theoretical gap between what student teachers have learned in campus courses and the classroom reality of teaching practice in schools (Darling-Hammond, 2006b:300-314). The student teaching experience needs to turn into a way to think about the pedagogical and psychological theories and skills learned in the classroom and a way to practise teaching and learning techniques.

Moreover, the practicum is typically regarded as essential for a student teacher's education (Farrell, 2008:226-241). The following are some of the justifications given regarding the significance of practicum implementation:

1. As a first step into a career, the practicum is very important because it "improves teachers' skills and adds to the body of knowledge about good teaching techniques".
2. Similar to an internship or field attachment in professions like medicine, law and engineering, a practicum exposes students to practical classroom experience in a traditional educational setting.
3. After reflecting on their practices with the help of their teachers, most teachers-to-be see the practicum as one of the most important ways to learn about how to be a teacher.
4. Students who want to become teachers may learn a lot from "exposure to the techniques of experienced teachers" if they have more teaching experience.

Empirical research evidence shows what is known about how well the teaching practicum is implemented, how far it is done, how it is conducted and what factors help or hinder its implementation in Ethiopia's teacher education college education system. In this study, the process of setting up a practicum programme at a teacher education college is looked at as an attempt to answer questions about how the practicum is thought about, set up and supported, as well as who is involved and what steps are taken (Geletu & Mekonnen, 2019:40-51; Panigrani, 2013:23–28; Tadesse, 2014:97-110).

Based on a review of different types of related literature on the idea of a practicum, its implementation process and its practices, and in order to better understand the idea, nature and assumptions behind the study of the process and techniques of implementing a practicum programme at a teacher education college and the factors that may affect its procedures and practices, certain contextual issues were identified (Education Development Roadmap, 2018; Fekede, 2009; Geletu and Mekonnen, 2019; Kedir, 2006; Mignot, 2009; Panigrani, 2013; Tadesse, 2014; Tesfa, 2011).

Thus, empirical evidence on student teachers, cooperating teachers and college supervisors' expectations of and benefits of practicum has indicated that success can be achieved in cases where there are very structured and organised field experiences. Evidence also suggests that student teachers usually emphasise the mastery of teaching skills and application of campus work as significant objectives of the practicum (Beck & Kosnik, 2002:81-98; Moore, 2003:31-42). Beck and Kosnik (2002:81-98) asked student teachers what they thought were the best qualities of a good practicum. Student teachers reported expecting emotional support, peer relationships, collaboration, constructive feedback, sound teaching approaches rather than reliance on traditional teaching approaches and flexibility to develop their teaching styles rather than mere imitation of their mentors. Beck and Kosnik concluded that Moore also indicated that although the practicum is usually intended to develop students' decision-making skills on various aspects of teaching and learning and reflective practice, practice shows that technical issues of teaching and routine tasks are emphasised (Moore, 2003). In a follow-up study of 77 student teachers, Moore found that their main concerns were "time management, teaching expected lessons and content, and classroom management".

Another problem commonly cited in the empirical evidence is the absence of clear roles and responsibilities for student teachers, mentors and college supervisors. While much of the evidence on the influence of cooperating teachers and university/college supervisors on student teachers indicates that cooperating teachers have more impact than university/college supervisors, it still appears that university/college supervisors have much more say in the assessment of students (Borko & Mayfield, 1995:501-518). However, this depends on whether university/college supervisors can provide good reviews and feedback to student teachers. In contrast, cooperating teachers who work with student teachers more often should be kept as observers for extended periods. As indicated above, university/college supervisor follow-up and observation of student teachers are minimal for various reasons. The question is, what kind of roles and responsibilities should mentors and university or college supervisors play? Borko and Mayfield (1995) found that cooperating teachers had a bigger impact on student teachers than

university or college supervisors, especially when it came to technical aspects of teaching and the fact that university or college supervisors only observed a few classes at a time.

These researchers suggest that university or college supervisors should rethink their roles as classroom observers. University or college supervisors should spend their limited time in schools helping cooperating teachers become teacher educators to support student teachers in becoming reflective about their practice. They can, for instance, set an example on how to observe student teachers and hold conferences focused on teaching and learning. They can also help and guide student teachers by putting theory and research-based ideas from their university or college classes into their lessons (Borko & Mayfield, 1995:517) ensuring that the practicum and course work fit together, which is often a challenge (Darling Hammond et al., 2005:392).

From a technical perspective, the extent of shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the triads has been mediating the importance of professional interaction and student learning in particular. As a result of clarity in role relationships, Ferrier-Kerr (2009:790-797) reported that there was smoother interaction between student teachers and associated teachers when they were working in "consultative, collegial, and collaborative styles of supervision". Research on teacher education also indicates that college-school partnerships influence the practicum's success. In cases where there are authoritarian relationships between mentors and college supervisors, schools fail to own teacher preparation as their responsibility, student teachers have reported little or no gain from the practicum (Tang, 2003).

Besides, Macharia and Wario (1989) reported that when too many student-teachers are allocated to one school, supervision becomes more challenging, and there is increased disruption in the regular school routines. Studies on the implementation of practicum programmes in many countries indicate that the practicum demands extra time and money, which becomes a challenging factor for tutors, mentors, student teachers and their institutions. More money needs to be spent on training and hiring more school teachers and teacher educators to make up for the lack of experienced

and qualified workers which points to more preparation and support activities being needed outside the classroom (MoE, 2007).

Bridges and Hallinger (1996), Schlecty (1990), Smyth and Shacklock, (1998) proposed that successful implementation of the practicum and institutionalisation of massive change in the education system, particularly in practicum-centred teacher education programmes, necessitates a thorough understanding of national resource capacity, visionary leadership and educational personnel commitment and readiness to take risks, as well as the re-establishment of a motivating and supportive environment. Several studies have been undertaken to explore various themes in the teaching practicum. For instance, Komba and Kira (2013:157–163) looked into the effectiveness of teaching practice in enhancing student teachers' ability to teach in Tanzania. The experiences and anxieties of student teachers during classroom practice were also examined by Ngidi and Sibaya (2003:18–22) and Marais and Meier (2004:220-233). Mapolisa and Tshabalala (2014:16-23) also investigated how what students in Zimbabwe did during teaching practice affected how they thought and felt about teaching.

Marais and Meier (2004) state that the teaching practicum presents its own unique set of difficulties, especially in developing countries like Eswatini, where factors such as low and uneven levels of educator expertise, a general lack of resources, and a general absence of discipline among a broad and diverse group of students and educators can all have a negative impact on the practicum's effectiveness. There are also problems with the timing of teaching practices and their short duration. It is the same, according to Bourdillon (cited by Ngara and Ngwarai, 2013) in the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Eswatini (Luyengo).

Only once, between the months of June and August, did Eswatini High School carry out its practicum course. It is possible that the proficiency of the student teachers, the amount of supervision they receive, and the amount of time they spend in the classroom (eight weeks) are all limited in this situation. If these problems are not solved, they can have a negative impact on the quality of education students receive and, eventually, on how they feel about becoming teachers themselves (Quick &

Sieborger, 2005). Mentors' and lecturers' disparate assessments of student teachers' performance in mathematics and science were one of the topics explored by Nyaumwe and Mavhunga (2005). Luneta (2006) looked at the role of mentorship in mathematics teacher development in the context of Eswatini teaching internships.

In another study conducted by Riesky (2013:250–261) in Indonesia, English Foreign Language student teachers encountered problems implementing the practicum. According to the study's findings, college teacher educators and school placement teachers should focus more on increasing the quality of their supervision or the assistance and direction they provide to student-teachers. Pre-service teachers require proper support and guidance during their teaching practicum. Improving the quality of the teaching practicum needs more time spent and dedication working with student teachers. Furthermore, updating the curriculum regarding basic pedagogical knowledge and abilities was necessary, especially in teacher education programme courses. This includes specific topics, like how to handle children with different characteristics.

Goh and Matthew (2011:11-23) also conducted a fascinating study in Malaysia based on the trainees' experiences. During the programme, teachers of 14 Malaysian student teachers researched their problems and experiences, including their teaching concerns and beliefs about teaching. Student teachers should endeavour to comprehend the challenges they encounter during their training. According to Goh and Matthew (2011), teacher preparation lessons should be more aligned with real-world school experiences and surroundings. There should also be a way for teachers to look over course content on a regular basis so that problem areas can be worked into the lessons. It is reported that several strategies are required to connect the theoretical components of university education to the classroom realities (Goh & Matthews, 2011), one of which is building effective links between placement schools and colleges (Graham & Thornley, 2000:235-245) as it is vital to provide a platform for teaching and use of the theoretical and practical components of teaching.

Smith and Lev-Ari (2005:289–302) also researched trainee attitudes in early childhood education practice. As a result, the study's key findings revealed that most trainees strongly value the teaching technique. In this regard, the trainees strongly believe in the value of the theoretical parts of teaching and learning activities. According to the above scholars, the theoretical parts of teacher education include knowledge of the subject matter, ethics in teaching and the ability to deal with differences.

Mitica (2011:551–567) also researched teaching effectiveness in Malawi, Africa. According to data from interviews with four trainees and one supervisor, some trainee teachers were overworked during the practicum's implementation. Because trainee teachers are still unqualified, the tasks and obligations assigned to them during the practicum's implementation have created ambiguity in their position. Other findings revealed a lack of support and direction from mentor teachers to trainees due to the college's new education policy. Furthermore, the findings of this study revealed that student teachers put their academic knowledge into practice by copying their school mentor teachers in terms of building teaching awareness and experience. The large number of students in each class and the lack of teaching and learning resources for trainee teachers to use in their classes, however, presented challenges for student teachers.

Another study was conducted in Sri Lanka by Wickramasinghe (2004), where pre-service teachers in their teaching preparation programme attempted to increase their effectiveness in teaching. Twelve trainees preparing to teach high school mathematics and sciences were among those who took part. The study employed conceptual maps of effective schooling and structured interviews as a data-gathering strategy. The findings revealed that student teachers require more "school life" practice to put their knowledge into practice and that student teachers need to develop firm teaching skills during their teaching experience. In addition, there are various flaws in the classroom environment that student teachers encounter. Student teachers were more concerned with the notion of teaching than with the students. The results of the study show that teacher training programmes should focus on

helping teachers understand and meet the needs of their students before they start teaching.

Dunn et al. (2000:393-400) also investigated student teachers' perspectives on teaching in the Australian environment. The research was carried out in the final year of a three-year undergraduate programme at the Queensland University of Technology to look into the students' teaching knowledge. The findings revealed that teaching practice promotes teamwork and realism in its professional function. The exercise allows participants to exhibit their skills as future teachers. Some participants claimed the field experience helped them assess whether the theory was valid, while others said it helped them practise and refine their approach. Tradition says that the practical class is a way for student-teachers to find out which career path is best for them.

Although there have been numerous types of student teachers' practicum experiences in academic teacher education programmes in various countries discussed in the literature, there has been relatively little and incomplete research on the difficulties and practices of implementing practicum in the Ethiopian educational system. The following section, which looks at the practicum programme and its implementation, offers a thorough explanation of the Ethiopian Training and Education Policy from the perspectives of teacher training and teacher education programmes, the teaching and learning process, the learning environment, and school-community involvement in Ethiopia's educational system. In order to synthesize teachers' expectations and teacher education generally, the national policy documents of the nation are analysed. The education policy, the TESO Framework for Action, the TESO Handbook, the TDP Blueprint, the fundamental principles for teacher education, and the Education road map are evaluated, and suggestions are offered for teacher education and the practicum. Additionally, the research on the teacher education program is subjected to a critical analysis. The Ethiopian Ministry of Education has also coordinated research on outcome assessment and practicum implementation. In light of the foregoing discussion, the next section analyses the key components of Ethiopia's education policy pertaining to teacher preparation.

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3.5 EXAMINATION OF ETHIOPIAN EDUCATION POLICY DOCUMENTS WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON TEACHER EDUCATION

In Ethiopia, modern education first appeared in 1908. Since then, development has occurred. Despite the advancements made thus far, the country's educational system is still not entirely ubiquitous. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia implemented policy reform in 1994 after becoming aware of this fact. The primary educational issues that the previous school system had were addressed by this policy. However, the last policy for education was not considered adequate because it lacked quality, relevance, fairness and access (Ahmed, 2013: 5-12; ETP, 1994).

As a result, teacher education in Ethiopia has been plagued by many difficulties for over fifty years. Numerous studies have revealed significant issues with Ethiopia's educational system, which would support the necessity to alter the teacher preparation curriculum. Ethiopia's government has implemented reforms in many industries since 1991. One of these is the field of education, where structural and conceptual adjustments were made at all educational system levels with the introduction of a new education and training policy (ETP) in 1994.

The 1994 Education and Training Policy gave importance to teacher education programs because they may transform society by creating individuals and communities that can actively participate in the development process by learning information, talents, skills, and attitudes (MOE, 2003). The most important parts of the 1994 policy are the teachers' overall development and the focus areas that they choose.

Therefore, it is expected that teacher education institutions prepare student-teachers who are entirely suited to the requirements of the modern classroom and possess subject-matter knowledge and pedagogical abilities. Since actual learning occurs in the classroom, having qualified and dedicated teachers is vital (MOE, 2005). Thus, the teacher training programme is important for developing teachers' skills and making sure they are able and dedicated to their jobs.

To realize the goals of the education and training policy, a major reform of the teacher education programme, known as the Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO), was initiated in 2002 and implemented in 2003. The Ethiopian Ministry of Education has called for sweeping changes to the country's educational system, prompting the development of a new policy document detailing a strategy to address systemic problems and raise the quality of teacher training in the country (MOE, 2003:6). Modifying the training given to pre-service teachers is one of the five strategies.

The Ministry of Education has identified the following issues (MoE, 2003): lack of a defined vision and mission for teacher training, a lack of enthusiasm and professional competence in hiring and selecting teachers and educational management. Ethiopian teacher education programmes have historically followed the standard pattern of pre-service general education courses on methodologies and teaching techniques, as outlined by Nemser (1990, in Solomon, 2006:108). The notion that being a teacher involves two steps: knowledge acquisition and application or transfer, is implicit in this structure (Kennedy 1993, in Solomon, 2006:108). The Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO, 2003) found problems with how well teachers were prepared, both in terms of how well they know their subject matter and basic content and how well they were trained in the classroom (Fekede & Gemechese, 2009:106-107). TESO made significant structural reforms and vowed to bring about a "paradigm shift" in Ethiopia's educational system by integrating teacher education with social transformation and encouraging democratic, practical, and problem-solving education. (Mekonnen, 2008:281).

The first of the new teacher education programmes' mission statements identifies dedication to producing qualified teachers who possess the necessary professional skills, the necessary professional knowledge, and the appropriate ethical principles embodied in the Ethiopian constitution, as well as citizenship attitudes and abilities to demonstrate the programme's conceptual approach. The following are noteworthy among the programme's declared objectives:

- To educate teachers on how to implement a learner-centered strategy and a curriculum that blends method and material to encourage active learning and the growth of problem-solving abilities.
- Teachers who know how to run a good classroom and have the skills to do so will encourage students to work together and ask thought-provoking questions.

An emphasis on active learning and a learner-centred approach is one of the changes suggested for the TESO programme, which serves as the foundation for the current TDP. The addition of different methods for evaluating the effectiveness of student teachers is another aspect of the reform. The TESO statement advocates assessment instruments "which might allow the student teachers to learn rather than make the educators inspectors of knowledge" to evaluate the more sophisticated teaching competencies and areas of the graduate profile (Ahmed, 2013:13-16; MOE, 2003:16). With the foundation of the TESO policy, the discussion turns to how teacher educations programmes help produce good teachers.

3.5.1 The Programme's Role in Producing Competent Teachers

A good and meaningful teaching-learning process in the classroom depends on the teacher education programme. It is challenging to guarantee the quality of instruction without professional responsibility and intellectually capable teachers. Tadesse and Meaza (2007:63-71) suggest that in order for teachers to do their jobs, there needs to be a well-designed and well-executed teacher preparation programme that prepares teachers who are smart, good at their jobs and ethically committed to their profession.

Fekede (2009:37-61) also underlined the need for teacher education programmes to develop competent educators for 21st-century classrooms. According to Abebe and Woldehanna (2013), a well-organised and extensive system for preparing future college or university teachers significantly contributes to the development of educational quality. The expansion of teacher education colleges made a significant contribution to the improvement of the number of trained teachers with the required

level of education. Teaching is a tough intellectual activity. Education for teachers is critical for raising teacher standards. The basic objective of a teacher education institution, according to the IQPEP (2011a), is to produce committed and qualified primary school teachers. A program for teacher education and training, together with training facilities, should begin with preparing future teachers to suit the demands of schools as they are currently.

The major objective of the teacher education program, as emphasized by Hailemariam (2007:43–57), is to produce teachers who are both qualified and competent in order to carry out their role as educators and to foster an atmosphere conducive to learning. Because of this, the teacher training plan is widely regarded as the single most important component that might significantly affect educational development in the country. Fekede (2009:37–61) argues that teachers function as change agents since they are crucial to the delivery and quality of a high-quality education. Because of this, most people think that programs that train teachers are essential to any good educational system.

Based on the literature mentioned above, a well-planned and coordinated teacher training programme is often essential to generating professional, competent and well-qualified teachers who can handle the various classroom teaching problems. School-based teaching practicum experience, which is one of the most important parts of the teacher preparation curriculum, should be a part of the teacher education programme in order to meet the goals listed above.

Student-teachers immerse themselves in a classroom where they can hone their teaching techniques. Additionally, it allows aspiring teachers to learn from an experienced teacher's mentoring, guidance and wisdom. The experience of teaching in a school or classroom and reflection and discussion based on the knowledge students have received, are all included in the practicum. As a result, it is regarded as the most crucial component of teaching credentials. In this course, student teachers should be able to visualise and understand the teaching-learning process, as well as comprehend how children act at school and what teaching is really like (MOE, 2003).

The practicum gives student teachers the chance to observe and grasp the complexity of educational institutions, pedagogical methods, assessment and curriculum implementation. This observation and these first steps into the classroom as an educator call for assistance. During the practicum, teachers can try out the teaching and discipline skills they learned in college. They do this with the help of cooperating teachers and college supervisors.

The practicum provides a framework and educational scaffolding for student teachers to demonstrate their abilities in the classroom, both academically and disciplinary, as well as the development of constructive educational interactions. The practicum program must be well implemented in order to close the knowledge gap between what student teachers learn conceptually in college programs and the reality of practical teaching in real classrooms in placement schools (Darling Hammond, 2006b:300–314). The next section, examines how the teaching practicum is used in Ethiopian Pre-Service Primary Teacher Education Programmes that train teachers before they start working.

3.5.2 Practicum's Role in Ethiopia's Pre-Service Primary Teacher Education Programmes: Critical Synthesis of Hossana College of Teacher Education

As previously noted in Chapter one, the most significant change brought about by the TESO (MOE, 2003) is that the practicum not only receives more attention in terms of the hours allotted to it but also has to be conducted concurrently with the theoretical courses from the beginning of the programme to ensure opportunities for student teachers to reflect on their experiences and to explore methods and practices for themselves.

As a result, the Ethiopian government is dedicated to ensuring that the teaching practicum is an integral element of the teacher education programme as a means for cultivating an educated workforce of *reflective teachers* (MOE, 2011:1). The notion of the reflective teacher is drawn from the work of Schön's *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (1983). As the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2011)

observes, the model for the practicum was previously based upon a reduced apprenticeship scheme where student teachers watch, follow and emulate teachers in the school. Therefore, the aim has been to pursue the long-term goal of reforming the training culture rather than apply a 'quick fix' response. The TESO document focuses on a response that builds a shared understanding between teacher education institutions, the Ministry of Education, regional education bureaus, teacher educators, schools and student teachers of the practicum as a way to develop teachers' reflexivity.

In the social sciences, reflexivity is an accepted concept that requires one to critically examine the consequences of one's guiding beliefs, professional knowledge and actions. As beginning teachers, the practicum must develop the habit of self-examination as a critical element of a review of teaching and learning in the classroom. In this respect, the practicum might be described as an *action research project* involving several vital participants — the children in the school, the student teacher, the cooperating teachers and the college supervisors. The practicum is an opportunity to apply knowledge and skills to develop a learning activity, review its strengths and shortcomings, and ask ourselves: "How might I change what I did to ensure that my students have a better educational experience?" Adapting the action research cycle (McTaggart & Kemmis, 1988) gives reflective student teachers a model to use in their professional practice and review. The figure below illustrates that the interdependence between the reflection and practice cycles needs planning, development, guided observation, implementation and practice.

Figure 3.1: The reflection and practice cycle

The Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) gave Ethiopian teacher education a solid structure where objectives are established, training guidelines are constructed, profiles for teacher educators and graduating teachers are created, and pertinent field experience is arranged. This strategy is crucial because Ethiopian teacher education has suffered from a lack of defined policy standards for decades (Adane & Dawit, 2002: 321-332; Dawit, 2008: 281-304). As a result, since 2003/4 the practicum has been a part of almost all teacher education programmes in Ethiopia.

However, here, the focus of the research attention lies in examining how the current practice of practicum is in alignment with TESO's constructivist teacher education framework and how the challenges of practicum are being met by the key stakeholders at Hossana College of Teacher Education, southern Ethiopia.

As previously mentioned, while working in primary schools, Hossana College of Teacher Education student teachers have participated in three interrelated stages of practicum programmes — preparation, observation and reflection. Their college tutors and school mentors have evaluated them based on their practical teaching, thoughts and portfolio. They also received professional support. From the first to the third years, there are practical courses. Additionally, by "splitting practicum into various phases," potential conflicts between the mentor teacher and the pre-service

teacher can be resolved without "hurting anyone's feelings or ego" (Manzar-Abbas & Lu, 2013a:182). The table below indicates the specific practicum courses that require a concurrently designed, three-year teacher education curriculum, including a practicum worth 14 credits at Hossana primary Teachers Education College. The detailed organisation of the practicum is set out in the table below.

Table 3.1: Organisation of the practicum courses

Course Title	Course Number	Credit Hour	Contact Hour	Year	Semester
Practicum 1: School Observation	201	4	4 days	1	2
Practicum 2: Working Under the Mentor	202	3	15 days	2	2
Practicum 3: Assisting the Mentor	301	3	15 days	3	1
Practicum 4: Independent Teaching	302	4	6 − 7 weeks	3	2

(Source: The MOE Primary Education Practicum Courses Guideline, 2011:10).

As indicated in Table 3.1, the Hossana College of Teacher Education's three-year teacher education programme is comprised of four practicum courses, based on the practicum guidelines documents and course materials prepared by the Ministry of Education.

Practicum I: School Observation: First Year, Second Semester

The first practicum is designed to help the student teachers take a fresh look at schools, classrooms, teachers, students, the school community and teaching and learning as it takes place in schools. Student teachers have had years of experience in schools and classrooms as students. This experience is an essential building block in constructing their understanding of teaching and learning. It is, however, an incomplete understanding (MOE, 2011:22-58).

Imagine seeing a film or going to a play. You sit in the audience and watch and engage with the actors' performance. Think about all of the activities that must occur beforehand so that you can see that performance. The actors will most likely go through a formal or informal training period and spend hours practising their lines and thinking about their gestures, emotions and movements before you take your seat in the audience. This preparation also applies to the complex interaction of activities; relationships and planning that go into teaching and learning in ordinary schools worldwide. Sitting in their rows attending the mathematics, language, science, history or geography lesson, students rarely think about the planning that has gone into the teacher's lessons. There is a great deal of activity and planning that we do not see as schoolchildren.

Practicum 1 helps the student teachers observe schools, classrooms and teaching and learning activities. They construct observation schedules, reflect on what they are watching, and apply this to planning for their work in schools as teachers. Practicum 1 also aims to establish a lifelong habit of collecting resources for teaching and learning and the disposition of the action researcher (MOE, 2011:22-58). In other words, the four practicum courses are not only designed to help the student teachers learn how to teach, but they are also designed to teach how to think about the why, the what, the how and the when of her/his teaching. The practicum teaches the student teachers how to observe everything around them, and it teaches them how to keep themselves in critically constructive ways.

Practicum 1 is divided into three related sections: Section 1: Observation Planning, Section 2: School Observation and Section 3: Reflections on School Observations, each of which are discussed below (MOE, 2011:22-58).

Section 1: Observation

Observation within the practicum is not a random gathering of impressions from the schoolyard and classroom. Student teacher observation is a purposeful and structured activity designed to assist them in looking more carefully into the black box or engine room of schooling, teaching and learning (MOE, 2011). Observation is

a crucial strategy for the qualitative researcher or reflective teacher to record contextualised data about teaching and learning in the school setting. Observed data is informational items gathered by methodically observing people going about their daily lives and events unfolding (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004:219). Researchers carefully watch how people interact and what happens in limited situations, recording everything they have observed.

Section 2: The Architecture of Education

As Kalantzis and Cope (2012:261) remind us, learning is a human activity that happens anywhere and everywhere … "Informal learning is a casual part of life experience". Education is quite different because it is learning by design. Schools are a particular form of educational design. If we make teaching and learning design visible in schools, we enable ourselves to analyse the nature, structure, and effectiveness of this form of learning. It is a requirement for making schools good places to teach and learn.

Section 3: Relationships within schooling

In the practicum, student teachers apply their skills and knowledge from the teachers' college programme, identifying the complex interplay of relationships between teaching and learning (MOE, 2011:22-58). Representing these relationships in linear patterns is challenging, as they are more like a constantly changing web of interactions between individuals, groups, objects, and contexts. There is an apparent relationship between the teacher and the student where I could the teacher transmits knowledge to the student in a one-dimensional relationship, as represented in Figure 3.2.
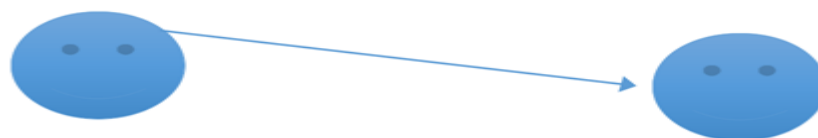
(Source: Desta, 2022)

Figure 3.2: Relationships of schooling

Because the teacher interacts with twenty, thirty, forty, or more students, the reality of the classroom is far more complex. Moreover, communication is not always mono-directional from teacher to student. The relationship between the teacher and each student may be nuanced or different because of the student's personality, ability or needs. Children (and adults) relate differently to various teaching materials and learning styles. Some people relate well to written text, others prefer the spoken word and still others like to see pictures or diagrams. People relate differently to different teaching and learning materials. Students have different relationships with different subjects, affecting their learning and relationship with the teacher. Some children like to learn by themselves (at their own pace), and others like working in small or large groups (MOE, 2011:22-58).

We also know that classrooms are the sites of a range of student relationships. Some students form close relationships with a group of their peers. Other students may be kept out of these group relationships. As a result, the teacher relates to individual students as well as groups of students, all of which could become quite complex.

As indicated in the practicum guidelines (MOE: 2011:37-48), sufficient time should be set aside to prepare the student teachers before commencing a series of observations in schools and classrooms. Student teachers require support to participate in and report on their guided observations. During the practicum course, student teachers complete two activities that help them become more reflective teachers and build a bank of resources that they can keep adding to throughout their careers as teachers (MOE, 2011:22-58).

In the observation process, the school should manage the observation with support from the College of Teacher Education. The school allocates students to classes and organises meetings with the principal (or delegate), curriculum coordinators, support personnel and others as deemed appropriate. The objective is to allow students to observe different classrooms and aspects of the school routine. Student teachers must be allowed to discuss their observations and ask college supervisors, mentor

teachers and learners' questions. To sum up, school mentors should make time to read students' observations and provide comments for them to reflect upon.

Practicum II: Working Under the Mentor: Second year, Second Semester

It is believed that experienced instructors have a lot to teach student teachers, both in terms of teaching techniques and school-related specifics. They thus play a central role in educating the new generation of Ethiopian teachers. The model teaches teaching skills, understands the unique identities of children in the classrooms, describes and explains the inner workings of the school and provides a link to the community (MOE, 2011:39-78). Therefore, in this practicum, student-teachers work under the mentor's direct supervision to fully comprehend how lessons are designed and implemented. This is a crucial moment in their growth as they work toward becoming teachers.

In Practicum Two, the student teachers work closely with the mentor teacher. They observe the architecture of teaching and learning in action to commence planning their professional practice. Understanding the elements of a lesson and the complexity of classroom interactions forms the focus of this experience in their development as classroom teachers. The teacher mentor may also guide them in developing ways of getting to know the children's educational needs, dispositions and abilities (MOE, 2011:39-78).

These practicum courses are designed to immerse student teachers in the classroom to gain a deeper understanding of the work of the school mentor teacher and the children in the classroom and how they learn. Practicums 2 and 3, which follow, will transition student teachers from the role of observant visitor to engaged ethnographer and apprentice educator. No one is born a teacher … we become teachers by learning, doing, reflecting and getting better (MOE, 2011:50-52).

In this second practicum placement, student teachers may return to the school they visited for focused observations or be placed in a different school. Their return to practice comes a year after their first practicum experience. During this time, they

have learned more theories and thought about what they had observed during Practicum 1.

Before student teachers commence their 15 days in the school during Practicum 2, there are three key concepts that they need to understand (MOE, 2011:55-78). Explanations of these three key concepts follow:

1. Planning

An appreciation of the meaning and importance of planning for teaching and learning is key to the teacher's education. Teaching and learning do not occur through osmosis. Planning is part of a teacher's daily routine, and as Britzman says so well in 2003, "practice makes perfect" (Churchill et al., 2011:198).

Hence, forethought, reflection and adaptation are essential elements of effective teaching and learning. The constant challenge is ensuring that students' experiences of learning are connected and challenging. To achieve this, pedagogy, curriculum and assessment needs planned and connected to context. Students need to be scaffolded in their learning so they are both challenged but safe taking note that over-planning rather than under-planning is best (Churchill et al., 2011:210).

Planning is undertaken within the context in which the student teacher operates. This means that it is important knowing the children in the classroom — their background, identities, likes, dislikes, interests, abilities, dispositions, needs and aspirations; the school — its structure, protocols and processes, culture, community and history; the programme — the sequence of the school day, the time table, the curriculum; the classroom resources — things that can be used in a lesson and the best way to put things in order. (Churchill et al., 2011:206-208)

Multiple plans guide a teacher's work. First, the project is articulated through policies, programmes, circulars and regulations issued by the Ministry of Education. This includes ministerial guidelines or plans for the curriculum. Schools, too, have planning cycles where policies and procedures are posted for all school organisation and community members. These are referred to as the MACRO elements of teacher

planning. Moving into the classroom, we enter the MESO and MICRO-domains of the planning (Churchill et al., 2011:206-208).

Macro	**Ministry of Education Policies, Programmes, Regulations & Accountability Framework**	**Meso**	**Annual School Plan & Evaluations**	**Micro**	**Student Profiles Student Diversity**
	National Curriculum Statements		**School Schedules, School Curriculum Plan & Reporting Cycle**		**Individual Student Learning Plans**
			School Resources		
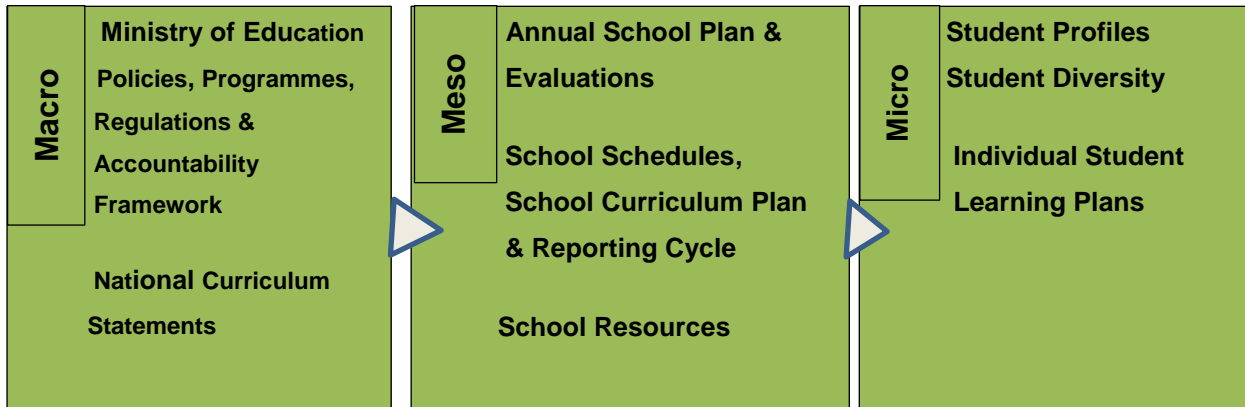
(Source: Churchill et al., 2011:206)

Figure 3.3: Guiding principles for planning

In addition, the figure below indicates the elements that should be considered when planning the lesson.

Planning must retain a degree of flexibility | Planning begins with knowing your students | Planning should include negotiation with students of some aspects of the learning | Planning requires attention to intellectual engagement | Planning entails a critically reflective stance

(Source: **Churchill** et al., 2011:208)

Figure 3.4: Elements of planning

2. Professionalism

The second concept that student teachers need to understand before being involved in Practicum 2 is professionalism. Like many other vocational areas, teachers see themselves as having joined a profession rather than adopting a job. People working in professions are guided by codes of ethics and practices and are expected to

discharge their duties according to a statement of standards. These standards govern the profession's values, knowledge, techniques and behaviours (MOE, 2011:6-8).

3. Student Identity

Knowing the learner's identity is the third concept. Teaching and learning commence with the student's knowledge in the classroom (Robinson & Aronica, 2015; Slee, 2011; Tomlinson, 2014). Understanding the uniqueness of each student assists in planning for better learning. This could be challenging as identity is not static. It is contingent. A student may have and present a particular identity in their family. For example, they may be the youngest in a large family. They may expect those around them to do more for them and look out for their welfare. They will be seen according to the family's religious and tribal affiliations, ethnicity, linguistic group, geographic location, class, gender, and so on. As the child moves into other groups, their identity is adjusted to fit the circumstances and the group in which they find themselves.

Practicum III: Assisting the Mentor: Third year, First semester

In this phase, the prospective teachers need to pass through the process of working under the close supervision of their mentor; it is believed that they gradually acquire the skill of assisting the mentor with some aspects of the teaching and learning process (MOE, 2011:79-95). This gives them valuable opportunities to examine in greater detail how classrooms run, how lessons are taught and how classrooms are managed. As a result, they acquire valuable skills that aid their development as qualified teachers. These are the rationales underpinning this course. In this third practicum course, student teachers can gain a greater appreciation of the complexity of teaching and learning and the challenges teachers confront in meeting the educational needs of all students in their classrooms (MOE, 2011:79-95). Working with the school teacher, the student teachers experience first-hand how much planning goes into becoming and being a teacher.

The apprenticeship of this practicum course in teaching comprises the opportunity to expose the student teacher to different tasks associated with teaching and learning

in the classroom, giving student teachers the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills acquired from the college programme and previous practicum experiences (MOE, 2011:79-95). The school's practicum coordinator and the school mentor assign particular tasks for the student teachers to complete in the classroom. In this way, student teachers gather more knowledge, skills and confidence as they work towards a period of extended teaching during the second semester of the third year of the teacher education programme. In this course, the theory and practice of connecting curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment and getting all children involved in learning is given major attention (MOE, 2011:79-95).

Before student teachers commence the 15 days in the school during Practicum 3, there are five key concepts that they need to understand. Explanations of these five key concepts follow.

1. Curriculum

The curriculum is variously defined by different scholars; for example, Kalantzis and Cope (2012:22) describe a curriculum as: "A pre-planned course of structured learning, about something and using the methods of particular disciplines like mathematics, history, and the like". Luke, Weir and Woods (2008:11) say that the curriculum is "all of the official and unofficial textbooks and other materials in the intellectual, scientific, cognitive, and linguistic fields that teachers and students use in the classroom and other learning environments to teach and learn".

Apple (1979) talks about the official school curriculum content in the materials used to transmit the endorsed information we want students to know and be assessed on. He also speaks of an unofficial curriculum that refers to the things we teach students through the way schools and classrooms are organised and operate. The curriculum endorses items deemed essential to know and indicates what is unimportant.

2. Syllabus

The syllabus is an agreed summary and outline of what is to be taught and learned. This includes skills, knowledge, capabilities and competencies. According to the

official curriculum statements, the lesson plans for each school subject are broken into three parts: content, skills and assessment. Lesson plans frequently commence with the syllabus statements (MOE, 2011:10).

3. Pedagogy

Pedagogy is 'the art or science of teaching practice'. Pedagogy reflects what you believe to be the most productive approach to fostering student learning. Educational practices include teacher-centred, student-centred, Socratic, blended, problem-solving or applied to teaching, collaborative pedagogy, differentiated teaching and critical pedagogy (MOE, 2011).

When student teachers think about pedagogy, they need to remember that they have choices and can adopt different educational approaches to assist students in developing strategies that enable them to know how to learn.

4. Assessment

Assessment is an often-misunderstood concept inside and outside education (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Gipps, 1997; Stobart, 2008). Testing, assessment, evaluation and reporting are at best used interchangeably and at worst incorrectly. In education, assessment most simply refers to the process of judging a student's learning. Assessment is a fundamental part of teachers' work. Assessment is a critical component of planning lessons. We need to assess what a student already knows, what they need to know and the ways that they will be able to make progress (MOE, 2011). There are many reasons for the assessment:

- Sort and rank students according to their abilities.
- determining whether a student is ready to advance to the next grade level or into a specific course stream;
- Judging the quality of teaching;
- Setting benchmarks for the following stages of teaching and learning
- Reflecting on a student's progress over a set period; and

- Adjudicating students' memories, skills, dispositions and values (MOE, 2011:118-143).

During Practicum 3, assessment for learning and assessment as learning is incorporated into student teachers' pedagogy as critical strategies to build productive teaching and learning (MOE, 2011:118-143). To explain this, we can look inside any classroom, and we will witness teachers applying informal assessments every day. They will constantly ask questions of their students to determine whether they have learned what they need or want them to know or be able to do. Teachers will ask the same question in different ways and to other children. The information they retrieve will help them to determine whether it is:

- Time to move on to the next part of the lesson:
- Explaining concepts more thoroughly or revising skills in practice is necessary.
- It is appropriate to set new work for some children while they explain concepts to children learning at a different pace (MOE, 2011:140-142).

Questions are therefore critical to learning. Teachers who are good at what they do will tell their students to ask themselves questions to help them learn how to learn and to see how well they understand ideas or skills.
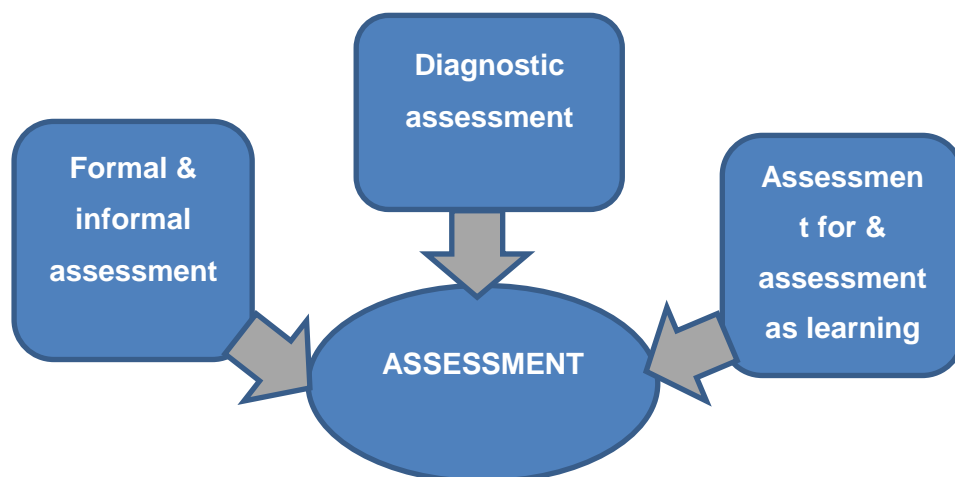
(Source: Adopted from MOE, 2011:140)

Figure 3.5: Forms of assessment

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Furthermore, teachers, wanting to ensure that all children learn effectively, provide students with different forms for demonstrating what they do and do not know. Sometimes there is confusion with a student's inability to express themselves through a particular medium as a lack of knowledge and understanding. This means that, as teachers, there needs to understand about different approaches to assessment.
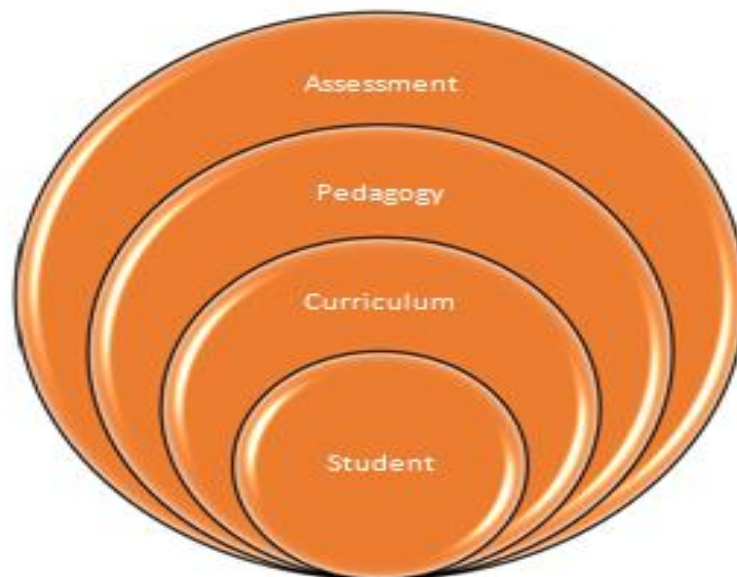
(Source: Adopted from MOE, 2011:142).

Figure 3.6: Student-centred assessment

To become a reflective teacher, it is important to knowing the students and then choose curriculum content that is relevant to the context and lives of those students, select instructional strategies that will engage and challenge all students and assess what students have learned and the effectiveness of the teaching strategies (MOE, 2011:6-8).

5. Educational Engagement

The term "educational engagement" is used to describe the depth and breadth of interactions between teachers and students that lead to meaningful lessons. There are many possible types of relationships in a classroom, including those between students, between groups of students, between teachers and students, between

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students and instructional mediums, between students and subject matter, and between teachers and their communities (MOE, 2011:7-8). This means that a teacher needs to know a lot about the students, the curriculum, the ways of teaching and learning, and himself or herself in order to create an environment where students are interested and challenged.

Some teachers might consider a student's lack of engagement with class as a discipline issue. Others may view it as a difficulty with instruction and learning. Students will be more interested and involved in the teaching and learning process if a diversity of teaching tactics and approaches are combined with a variety of curriculum materials that are relevant to their lives (MOE, 2011:7).

The key to educational engagement is ensuring that every child is valued and made to feel they belong to a community of learners (Lave & Wenger, 2016). Children need to trust that making mistakes will not be seen as a problem but as a necessary step to learning. Teachers can establish this classroom culture.

Practicum IV: Independent Teaching, Third year, Second semester

In this last practicum course, the focus is on developing a greater appreciation of the complexity of teaching and learning and the challenge that student teachers face in meeting the educational needs of all learners in their classroom. The student teachers work with the students in different teaching and learning situations (MOE, 2011:96-115).

The fourth practicum is perhaps the most exciting, challenging and anxiety-inducing. The student-teachers are appointed to a school for up to seven weeks, comprising six weeks in school and one week of reflection and evaluation at college. In this practicum course, the student-teachers apply the knowledge and skills they acquired from the college programme and previous practicum experiences to develop lesson plans that are tested by using them in real classrooms with real students. The school practicum coordinator and school mentor create the sequence of planning and teaching and provide constant commentary on the progress of student-teachers. In this practicum course, the student-teachers have an authentic experience of

teaching a whole class of children in their classroom (MOE, 2011:96-115). It is also expected that student teachers take part in extracurricular activities. The student teachers in collaboration with the classroom teacher prepare lesson plans; however, this gradually decreases, leading to the student teachers' independent lesson plan preparation. During this time, the teaching of lessons is examined, and peers and teacher educators offer feedback (reflection and evaluation). This follows a plan for how mentors, university/college supervisors, and peers give ongoing, helpful feedback. Student teachers reflect on their progress, successes and challenges with the college supervisor, school mentors, and student peers. This is an exercise in professional reflectivity (MOE, 2011:96-115).

The discussions above have indicated that all the four practicum courses that form this study embrace the principles described in the previous chapter. The themes indicated in each of the practicum courses are significant as they are both practicum themes and motivators for the continuing professional learning of student teachers following graduation. Teaching is a continuing action research project where they reflect critically on their beliefs, knowledge, practices, and dispositions as they manifest in our work in schools and classrooms. Teachers critically reflect upon their performance and the context within which it is situated. Their job is transformative: transformative for the lives of their students and themselves. Through teacher agency and that of their students, teachers are engaged in a career that aims to improve the world in which they live.

Hence, the following themes are covered in the practicum courses:

- Awareness of school organisation, relationships and communication.
- Developing and broadening educational experiences to include all students.
- Critical agency and reflective practice
- Collaborative teamwork.
- Creativity and innovation to build problem-solving knowledge and skills (MOE, 2011).

As student teachers start working in real schools and classrooms, the American educational philosopher offers words of wisdom:

It is . . . advisable that the teacher should understand, and even be able to criticize, the general principles upon which the whole educational system is formed and administered. He is not like a private soldier in an army, expected merely to obey, or like a cog in a wheel, expected merely to respond to and transmit external energy; he must be an intelligent medium of action.

JOHN DEWEY, 1895

Figure 3.7: The philosophical views of John Dewey, 1895

As indicated in the primary teacher education practicum guidelines (MOE, 2011), the practicum courses are undertaken through different sequential units that lead student teachers through guided observation, shadowing the mentor, working with the mentor and culminating in independent teaching. The practicum courses recognise that student teachers, having experienced school as students, must now learn to look at schools, teachers and students from a different vantage point. They need to observe and engage with the complexity of schools and classrooms, understand the work behind the formation of educational experiences through teaching and learning, and consider how to apply their developing knowledge of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment in schools and classrooms. The figure below illustrates organisation of the practicum courses.
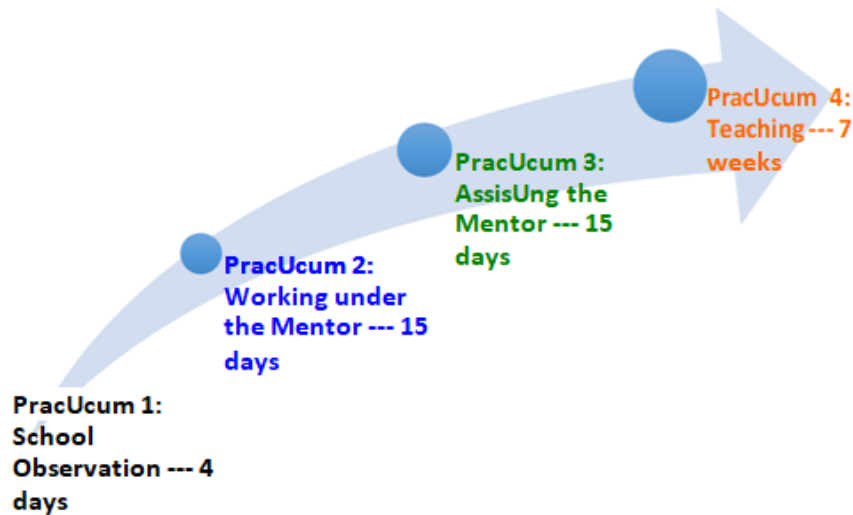
(Source: MOE, 2011:8).

Figure 3.8: Practicum course organisation

My analysis of the layout of the four practicum courses illustrated in the figure above, the practicum guidelines document and a synthesis of my own experiences as a teacher educator has led me to believe that the practicum's primary goal is to place student teachers in classrooms at an early stage of their training. In this way, they can build solid connections between their guided observations in actual schools and the theoretical courses taught at college (Zeichner, 2010). As a result, for student teachers, college lecturers and supervisors and cooperating teachers, teaching methods (including curriculum development and application, pedagogy and assessment), child psychology, school organisation, community context, and inclusive practices (Universal Design for Learning) come to life conceptually and practically (Kalantsis & Cope, 2012). In this way, connections are made that represent a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 2016).

Researchers reported that despite the practicum programme being given priority in Ethiopian teacher training programmes, the programme is still not being successfully implemented for a number of reasons, including a lack of commitment and the perception of practicum stakeholders (Fekede, 2009; Kedir, 2006; Mignot, 2009; Tesfa, 2011). Since the practicum is relatively new phenomenon in our education system, major research work has as yet not been conducted. However, results from

local studies have highlighted numerous difficulties the practicum programme has faced since its implementation.

Kedir (2006) did research on the inconsistencies, problems and uncertainty in Ethiopian teacher education. He found that many teachers did not know what practicum programmes were or how they worked. Fekede (2009) found that the most difficult parts of putting the practicum programme into place are the lack of close supervision and follow-up, the lack of funding, the lack of support, the inappropriate behaviour of schoolchildren and the lack of collaboration with the school.

Teka (2002:85-91) researched "Perceptions of Teaching Practice in Bahir Dar University" and came up with the following findings: a) the length (duration) of the time assigned for teaching practice was insufficient; it was regarded as too short to meet its objectives, develop the abilities and dispositions of a capable and successful educator, and evaluate and discover one's strengths and weaknesses; (b) the timetable did not allow student teachers enough time to complete the scheduled tasks; (c) the university and cooperating schools paid insufficient attention to the practicum; d) for many of participants, current teaching practice was a way to evaluate the course, but for others, it was more about how things are done.

Other interesting local research was conducted by Reda (2001:57–63) on "Conceptions of Constructivist Teaching Approaches in Higher Institutions," particularly at Bahr-Dar University. The research findings revealed that Bahir Dar University instructors encouraged student autonomy and initiative, designed lessons in terms of behavioural objectives and helped students synthesise and evaluate ideas during the instructional process. In short, the teachers really understood and were able to implement a new way of teaching and learning.

According to a study by Mignot (2009:5), the practicum was not well implemented because there were too many student teachers; the school infrastructure was not good enough; participants did not understand the programme and were not committed; there was not a clear way to evaluate them; and there was not a strong link between the college and placement schools.

Amdework researched how to administrate a practicum in a private teacher education institution (2007). He concentrated on practicum implementation in private colleges. His study's findings reveal that mentors were not carrying out their roles effectively due to a lack of time, a large number of student teachers assigned to them, and a lack of mentoring skills. In 2006, Shumet Kebede examined the "Reflective Approach to Teacher Education". Shumet highlighted the importance of using a student-centred approach to instruction instead of more conventional teaching methods. Additionally, Mesfin Awoke (2002) conducted research pertinent to practicum. His work, titled "The Supervisory Process of Practicum," focuses on practicum supervision. Fekede (2009) also studied Jimma University's practicum programme for undergraduate students.

TESO's aspirations for a longer field experience and efficient monitoring and practice were implemented to address several issues might hamper the practicum's implementation. The problematic aspects of practicum implementation are related to its length, time, requirements, relationship to the quality of mentors' professional support, as indicated by Smith and Lev-Ari (2005), as well as college/university courses, the type and intensity of supervision, and other factors. Cochran Smith (1991, in Teka, 2002:85–91) reported that there is not enough time in the supervisors' schedule to evaluate and provide comments on the teaching practices of the student teachers.

Furthermore, the Education Development Roadmap (2018:39), Geletu and Mekonnen (2019:40-51), Panigrani (2013:23-28) and Tadesse (2014:97-101) identified practicum-related challenges such as teacher educators' and cooperating teachers' workloads, a lack of time to continuously assess and provide feedback, ineffective coordination and evaluation and insufficient intern mentoring. As a result of the above and the discussion in Chapter one, the current researcher is not sure that the practicum programme can be put into place successfully in the study area.

The above reported research suggests that there is still a gap in the practicum programme's actual implementation where the focus has been on curriculum integration in private colleges, supervision and a reflective approach to teacher

education as well as the practice of teaching foreign languages. In contrast, the focus of this research is on how the existing practicum practice aligns with TESO's constructivist theory of learning and how the challenges of the practicum are being met by key stakeholders at Hossana College of Teacher Education.

Furthermore, because this kind of research has not been conducted at Hossana College of Teacher Education, there is no empirical evidence regarding the procedures and challenges of the practicum programme. The elements that affect the effectiveness of the practicum programme's implementation in light of the constructivist teacher education framework in the context of Hossana Primary Teachers' Education College has not been determined. As a result, there is a research gap, and my study aimed to fill the gap.

This study then gives particular attention to the procedures and challenges associated with implementing the Practicum at Hossana College of Teacher Education. Bhargava (2009:101-108) asserts that an effective practicum programme can be created when the placement school and the university/college collaborate. Understanding the elements that affect how well teaching practicums work enables the training institution to know how well the teaching practicum model prepares prospective teachers to make necessary improvements. Accordingly, the study could be used to improve the teaching practicum at the Hossana College of Teacher Education. The practicum, as a reflective practice, has gained due attention in the literature on teacher education. Its success, though, will depend on whether or not the practicum is based on ideas that are typical of a good programme for training teachers.

3.6   SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The practicum shows us that teaching must increasingly become a collective endeavour. Teaching and learning are, as we have learned from the teachings of Lev Vygotsky and John Dewey, relational pursuits. However, as we have seen from the discussions in this chapter, teaching has been described as a privatised activity in many countries worldwide. In other words, the teacher closes the door and

conducts lessons with their class in isolation from other teachers. TESO helps us to understand that this should be changed if we need to improve the quality of teaching and learning. To this end, questions should be raised: How might we ensure we work with each other to enhance children's educational experiences? Can I build my confidence by inviting other teachers into my room to help me think about how we can teach better? This is not a challenge to the professionalism of the teacher. Therefore, collaborative improvement is a sign of a reflective practitioner and a genuine learning organisation (Senge, 1990:3). Senge's definition of a learning organisation is that it is one where "individuals continuously grow their potential to get the results they really want; where new and expansive patterns of thought are encouraged; where collective aspiration is set free; and where people are always learning to see the whole picture" (Senge, 1990:3).

Hence, this chapter attempted to explore the international best practices of teaching practicum across different countries first and then in the context of Ethiopia's practicum setting. This chapter also put together a critical summary of the pre-service practicum experiences at Hossana College of Teacher Education. From the discussions, we have learned that teaching practicum is a continuing action research project where we reflect critically on our beliefs, knowledge, practices and dispositions as they manifest in our work in schools and classrooms. We critically reflect upon our performance and the context within which it is situated. Our job is transformative, both for the lives of our students and for ourselves. Through our agency and that of our students, we are engaged in a career that aims to improve the world we live in.

The chapter also recognises that student teachers, having experienced school as students, must now learn to look at schools, teachers, and students from a different vantage point. They need to observe and engage with the complexity of schools and classrooms, understand the work behind the formation of educational experiences through teaching and learning, and consider how to apply their developing knowledge of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment in schools and classrooms. Furthermore, the national policy documents of the country were reviewed in this chapter to synthesise expectations for teachers and teacher education in general. All

policy documents related to teacher education, such as the education policy, the TESO Framework for Action, the TESO Handbook, the TDP Blueprint, and minimum standards for teacher education, were analysed. In addition, a critical review was conducted on a number of research studies on the teacher education programme, particularly on implementing practicum internationally and locally. The focus of the next chapter is how my research was set up and conducted with justification for choices made.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1   INTRODUCTION

According to the research question in Chapter one, investigating the basic ideas of the constructivist theory of learning into practice in the pre-service practicum programme was the driving force behind this research project. Explanations of empirical research, theoretical underpinnings and the literature have been attempted in this case. As a result, this chapter comprehensively describes the research strategy employed in this study; that is, it provides the overall direction of the research procedure, including the process conducted. Following the recommendations of Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), Creswell (2014), Neuman (2014), Patel, and Patel (2019), this chapter is concerned with the explanation of the following: (1) why is this research study being undertaken? (2) How did the researcher develop a research question? (3) What types of data sets were collected? (4) What particular method has been used? (5) Why was a particular technique of data analysis used? (6) What were the philosophical assumptions underlying this specific study?

The philosophical and methodological decisions made in this regard are called epistemological principles that inform the analysis. It also explains the choices made; that is, the research methodology chosen is determined by the questions posed (Viswambharan & Priya, 2016:43-59).

Hence, the chapter answers the questions stated above through investigations to successfully reach the research aim. Based on this, the next section examines the rationale for empirical research.

4.2   THE RATIONALE FOR EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Using a qualitative research strategy seemed like the best bet for understanding the data entirely because of its emphasis on fieldwork, inductive analysis, richly descriptive conclusions and that the results of this study are based on what the participants saw and what they wrote down about their day-to-day experiences in the field (Creswell, 2014:32).

By gathering information from a typical Ethiopian teacher education institution, the current investigation sought to empirically determine how much the fundamental concepts of the constructivist theory of learning were put into practice in the pre-service practicum program. Direct knowledge of the phenomenon from personal experience is necessary for empirical research. The empirical research is an observational investigation that the researcher uses them to address the research questions or attempts to address them by gathering first-hand information from real-world situations (Yin, 2003:67).

Additionally, a research question is an empirical inquiry, meaning that the researcher would attempt to answer it by gathering direct and verifiable facts through fieldwork rather than using a model, theorising, thinking or making an argument based on its fundamental premises. Empirical research is based on the idea that one should use observable facts to build and test theories and answer research questions (Punch, 2006:3).

When it comes to this specific study, empirical research allowed me to explore more about how the fundamental ideas of the constructivist theory of learning are put into practice in the pre-service practicum program at the educational institution where the key players eventually work, what factors affect how the constructivist theory of learning is put into practice in the pre-service practicum programme at the teacher education institution and what past studies suggest about how the pre-service practicum program can be better put into practice in line with the constructivist theory of learning by using first-hand accounts of fieldwork.

This empirical study attempts to fill gaps in the phenomenon's contextual, conceptual, and theoretical assumptions. For conclusion and adequate outcomes, Creswell (2009) contends that genuine research necessitates a larger volume of both empirical and theoretical research.

More specifically, this research contributes significantly to our understanding of how the constructivist theory of learning is put into practice within the practicum program. The findings of this study are vital in informing college deans, practicum coordinators, school principals, and tutors and mentees about the program's successes and failures. Since practicums are a new part of the Ethiopian education system, this research study is unique in how it was done and in what it found.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is a strategy for answering your research questions. It determines how you will collect and analyse your data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:22). My definition of research design includes not only the research questions, paradigms, and techniques but also its methods, sampling, and data-generating processes, as well as the connections between these elements (Creswell, 2014:12; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lichtman, 2006; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:490; Silverman, 2006; Yin, 2003). Denzin and Lincoln (2005:24) say that a good research strategy "places the researcher in the real world and ties [him or her] to specific places and people, as well as organizations, institutions, and bodies of relevant interpretive material, such as papers and archives."

It is important to note that to answer research questions; I need a research strategy (Creswell, 2014:236). According to Creswell, a researcher must first select how they want to do their research before they even begin writing. To put it another way, a research design is a strategy for determining what information is needed, how it will be gathered, and how it will be analysed to answer your research questions.

A research design also serves as the foundation for the strategies and techniques. Thanks to the design, I can concentrate on research procedures relevant to the subject matter and set up the studies for success. The design of a research topic

explains the type of investigation and its subtypes (Creswell, 2014). Yin (2003:22) says that a study's credibility is improved by thoroughly explaining how the research was done.

In general, a qualitative study is a method of inquiry that makes it easier to explore phenomena in the context of their data sources. According to Yin (1994), a case study is an empirical investigation into a current event in a practical setting. People say that case study research is a diverse activity with many different research methods, areas of study, lengths and levels of involvement in how an organisation works, and different types of data (Hartley, 1994).

Yin (2003:22) provided an additional explanation of the various case study categories based on the questions that the researcher is aiming to address. The possibilities to study or describe phenomena in context using multiple data sources are made possible by rigorous qualitative case studies (Creswell, 2007:17). It enabled (the researcher) to investigate people or organisations (Baxter & Jack, 2008:544).

However, the decision between single-case and multiple-case study methods comes down to personal preference (Yin, 2003). Contextual conditions are what differentiate the two. The single-case design method looks at a single set of context conditions, while the multiple-case design method is good for looking at scenarios from different contexts (Yin, 2003:40–42).

Therefore, in this research, I analysed a single context, that is, the pre-service practicum programme, from various perspectives. It is important to analyse pre-service practicum programmes within the context of the college and its partner schools. A single-case design for this study was also selected because the context is a representative case. Since this case study focused on one programme in the college and its partner schools, it is considered a single context and, hence, a single-case studies (Yin, 2003:40-41).

Why Use Single-Case Studies in Holistic Design?

While the above single-case study approach does not allow for comparisons across other programmes, it does allow for more in-depth analysis of its particular programme. In these kinds of case study designs, Yin also made a distinction between embedded case studies and holistic case studies (Yin, 2003:43-45). Case study designs can consist of single-case (holistic) designs (Type 1), single-case (embedded) designs (Type 2), multiple-case (holistic) designs (Type 3), and multiple-case (embedded) designs (Type 4) (Yin, 2003:39).

Therefore, this research's case study design was influenced by the single-case (holistic) design (Yin, 2003). Yin argued that a holistic approach is beneficial when the nature of the topic is itself holistic. Due to the broad nature and expansive research on the topic of the pre-service practicum programme, this is a holistic single-case study. Given the multiple perspectives from different stakeholders analysed as part of this case study, a single case design using holistic evidence was best. In addition, since I was not going to use other programmes as comparisons, I needed to study this pre-service practicum programme in depth to fully understand it (Yin, 2003).

Alternatively, as the same research was undertaken at a single college of teacher education and its partner schools using similar data collection and analytic methodologies, and having to take into consideration the context, it can be classified as a single case (holistic) design or, as Yin (2003) indicates, a Type 1 design.

The following section describes the research paradigm, the approach and type/strategy employed in the current study.

4.3.1   Research Paradigm

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2008:245), a paradigm is "a core set of beliefs that influence action" comprising epistemology, ontology, axiology, and methodology. To support this, (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019; Taber, 2014:1863) noted that "...methodological decisions in educational research are informed by axiological as

well as ontological and epistemological considerations". Each paradigm has its own assumptions, standards and methodological procedures. It is critical to comprehend and describe how paradigmatic ideas influence design decisions.

Therefore, with a focus on pre-service practicum programme implementation phenomena, this research was situated within the interpretive paradigm and discusses meaning-making and participant experiences (Gray, 2004). Cohen et al. (2007:20–21) give a practical explanation of the assumptions that make up the interpretivist paradigm, which has been used to frame the discussion (the approach) that follows and explain how this study was conducted.

Stake (1995) and Yin (2003; 2006) are the "two known approaches" (which define case study methodology) (Baxter & Jack, 2008:545). Stake and Yin base their case study methodology on a constructivist paradigm, according to Baxter and Jack (2008). This paradigm holds that reality is relative and depends on one's perspective. The constructivist paradigm does not completely reject the idea of objectivity, but it does "recognise the centrality of the subjective human production of meaning" (Baxter & Jack, 2008:545).

Thus, participants in interpretive research are seen as actively shaping and interpreting their social environment with purpose and intention (Cohen et al., 2007: 20–21). As a result, in this study, the interpretative methodological stance (position) is congruent with constructivism, with its underpinning epistemological position, which holds that people actively generate meanings by participating in their social surroundings (settings) (Guba & Lincoln, 2008:97-128; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017: 33). Hence, this study was founded on the epistemological tenet that participants are essential to forming and mediating social reality because they bring it into being (Gray, 2004). It is caused by people's inter-subjective consciousness, which is made up of their ideas, customs, attitudes and actions at a certain time and place.

Therefore, this study's epistemological stance relies on the premise that social reality is created by the people who engage in it (Mertens, 2005:12). From this, one can see that the ontology of the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm assumes that there

is not just one reality (Ormston, Spencer, Barnard, & Snape, 2014:4). Constructing meaning from the social context is what these "constructions" are all about (Creswell, 2003:8). I, in this field emphasise the social construction of reality (Searle, 1995), my closeness of the relationship to the research subject (Crabtree & Miller, 1999), and the limits imposed by the surrounding environment (context) in my work. In this field, people study how and why social interactions happen and what they mean (Creswell, 2014:37-38; Gall 1996:18).

In addition, a social-constructivist approach was also used in this research as the main framework to discover the people involved in the pre-service practicum implementation's practices, beliefs, and "life experiences" (Creswell, 2014:37-38; Patton, 2002b:268). Constructivist interpretivism holds that "reality is socially produced". Research has to pay special attention to this structure and its many perspectives. As more studies are conducted, "an interpretative understanding of this increases" (Richards, 2003:38).

Following the description of the practicum as a socially constructed event, an interpretive approach/method within the constructivist paradigm turned out to be the most explicit and valuable framework for guiding this research, because the purpose of this study was to examine the roles that student teachers, associate teachers (school mentors), and teacher educators played in implementing practicums, individually and collectively, as well as the meaning they ascribed to the practices and experiences of implementation within the context of the practicum triad (Creswell, 2014:37-38). The study's goal was not to find a "universal truth" about practicums (Guba & Lincoln, 2008:97-118). Instead, it was to find out how participants used their practicums and made sense of their experiences.

Interpretivism also places a strong emphasis on the significance of context. Events and behaviours are seen as "situated activities" that are affected by their environment (Cohen et al., 2007:20; Creswell, 2014:37-38; Crotty, 1998). In this study, the practicum was considered as a situated activity to capture key participants' perceptions of the institutional, social and private contexts that influenced the practicum's implementation and experience. By viewing the context of phenomena, I

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can support the constructivist epistemology's emphasis on meaning-making and understanding (Creswell, 2014:37-38; Gray, 2004). Because of this, the primary data generation methods in interpretivism were interviews and observations.

This section gave a high-level overview of how the study's epistemology and theoretical perspective fit together, and the next section moves into more detail about the study's approach, strategy and methodological framework.

4.3.2   Research Approach

When choosing the methods for this study, the most important thing to think about was whether or not each one made sense in the context of the investigation and would help achieve the main goal stated in the research objectives.

Was there a suitable match between the objectives of the study, the broad research aims, and the methodology employed? How could this study produce insightful information about the real-world encounters of such a wide range of practicum participants? After these practical issues were taken care of, it was clear that the qualitative methods approach to the study would give the most extensive and detailed data to meet the research goals (Creswell, 2014: 245; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 345).

Hence, I decided to conduct qualitative research to investigate the current practices of practicum programmes at the research site. This topic would lend itself to qualitative data collection techniques like in-depth semi-structured interviews, observation, written documents, and field notes (Creswell, 2014: 256; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 345)..

As Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) explain, qualitative or naturalistic research acknowledges that what occurs in our schools and classrooms consists of multiple meanings, interpretations, values, and attitudes. In other words, qualifying acts, ideas, values and meanings through participants' eyes is preferable to quantification via the eyes of an external observer (Yin, 2018). Numerous studies elaborate on how in-depth, thorough accounts of events, interviews and other data make qualitative

research effective. The above two writers claim that qualitative data is particularly effective due to its sensitivity to the social, historical and temporal settings in which it is acquired. Context sensitivity is essential to them because the data cannot be used in other situations that are different socially, geographically or in terms of time.

Briefly, qualitative research focuses on characteristics of things and actions and meanings that are not scientifically investigated or quantified in terms of number, amount, intensity or frequency (Cohen et al., 2018: 22; Amare, 2004:41-61; Denzin, 2000). In a review article, Mohajan talked about the validity and reliability of good research that makes qualitative studies more transparent and makes it harder for researchers to introduce bias (Mohajan, 2017:59-82).

Given its proven track record of in-depth analyses of research problems, the qualitative research technique was selected as the methodology for this study. The primary inductive process of categorizing data and identifying patterns (relationships among categories) is what is referred to as "qualitative research" (Cohen et al., 2018: 22; Schumacher & McMillan, 1993:479). Creswell (1998) says that the essence of qualitative research is an inquiry process of knowing based on multiple methodological traditions of inquiry that looks at a social or human issue.

Creswell defined a study as one that generates intricate and comprehensive images, investigates language, allows for a close examination of the data, and is conducted in a natural setting. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) say the same thing about the power of qualitative research:

> Through situated action, qualitative research immerses the observer in the world. It consists of a collection of interpretive material acts that bring the outside world into focus. These practices change the world. Field notes, interviews, chats, pictures, recordings, and memos to oneself are just a few of the representations they create of the outside world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008:1).

However, Strauss and Corbin (1998, in Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:3) state that "qualitative research is any kind of research that leads to conclusions that can't be measured by statistics or other methods."

I believe qualitative research is better suited to an in-depth investigation of the answers to the research questions posed in this study and to achieving the objectives set, as it would be more appropriate to collect data from people who are directly or indirectly involved in the pre-service practicum implementation process and those who are currently experiencing it at the institutional level (Strauss and Corbin, 2015). Based on what I know about the above approach, I think the qualitative method most appropriate for studying the issues I wanted to examine in this study.

My decision to use a qualitative approach for the problem at hand was also directly related to what Berg (2004) said. Researchers could examine how people structure and provide meaning to their daily lives using qualitative methodologies, enabling them to share others' knowledge and views (Braun and Clarke, 2013:21). Therefore, I used qualitative methods to look at how people learn about themselves and others.

Qualitative approaches were also used in this study because they were able to capture and communicate participant perspectives, which tell the programme's story (Patton, 2002a). It emphasises that because they describe what happened when, to whom, and with what effects, case studies include all the components of a good story. The main reason this study used qualitative methods was to collect data and come up with conclusions that could be used to explain how the practicum programme works and how to do it.

As qualitative methods pose the questions of how and why a programme is or is not implemented correctly, and not simply whether a programme is running in the intended way (Patton, 2002a), the qualitative methods were an essential part of this case study to determine and understand the effectiveness of the implementation of the practicum programme. The research method used can vary concerning the researcher's epistemological position and the nature of the research questions.

Areaya (2004:2) states that we might naturally lean toward a qualitative case study if we want to know "how" or "why" the programme worked or did not work.

4.3.3   Research Type/Strategy

The use of case study research in qualitative studies across several disciplines has increased significantly (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). According to Simons, a case study is an in-depth examination from numerous viewpoints on the complexity and uniqueness of a specific initiative, policy, institution, programme, or system in real life (Simons, 2009). A case study can also be an in-depth analysis by a researcher of a program, event, activity, process, or one or more people, according to Creswell (2009). Problems, context, issues, and lessons learned should make up the structure of a case study (Creswell, 2014).

Yin (2003:14) and Stake (2005:444) define a case study as a detailed, often long-term look at a single instance of a phenomenon, either to describe it or to test a theory. Commonly, case studies focus on people's daily lives (Whitley, 1996:38). Thus, the following aspects were my primary focus during my research:

- A problem that is an in-depth and vivid account of the case's events;
- An event-by-event account in chronological order;
- There is a conflict inside of oneself between event interpretation and event description;
- A focus on specific instances in the case;
- A focus on particular individuals or groups of people, as well as their perceptions;
- Participating in the case is like being a researcher;
- It is a way to make an argument that shows how complicated the situation is (Dornyei, 2007:41).

Whitley (1996: 38) further explained that case studies can incorporate the participants' viewpoints and interpretations of the data, offering new insights into a bounded system. Therefore, this case study was bounded by place: one college and six partner primary schools working jointly for the practicum programme. I also spent

much time describing and understanding the situations and gathering information from different sources to give a full, detailed picture of the case. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) think that one of the most important benefits of qualitative research is the detailed description of events, interviewees and other things. Rich data makes it possible to learn more about a topic than either experimental or survey research could.

According to Gall, Borg and Gall (2005a), researchers use case studies to describe, clarify, or assess specific social phenomena. In many case studies, the goal of the description is to show and explain an educational phenomenon. It provides a clear explanation of phenomena, that is, a set of statements that re-create the situation and give readers a sense of the meanings and interactions inherent in that situation. Gall et al. (2005a) consider the case study to have the following key characteristics:

1. **The study of particular instances**

If we are interested in learning more about a specific topic, we can do a case study focusing on that particular topic.

2. **An in-depth study of the case**

A case study requires gathering essential data regarding the particular instance or cases chosen to distinguish between the phenomena. Data is typically collected over an extended period with several methods of data collection.

3. **Investigation of the phenomenon in its natural setting**

In a case study, the researcher must often interact with the people studied in their natural environments. This is called 'fieldwork'.

4. **Emic and etic perspectives are both represented**

Case studies aim to understand the phenomenon as its participants experience it, as opposed to trying to grasp a complicated phenomenon as its observers experience it or to interpret phenomena in light of the meaning different people assign to other

occurrences. The participants' points of view are called the "emic perspective" (Gall, 1996:548).

In most cases, the emic perspective is gained through casual discussions with case study participants and by observing them in the field as they behave naturally. Researchers use case studies to examine phenomena tend to keep an open mind about what they are doing. The etic perspective refers to their viewpoint as seen from without. In this way, they can make sense of the case and present my findings in a way that makes my contribution to the field evident (Gall, 1996:548).

A case study is more appropriate to investigate curricular issues as it is described in precise and concise words. Case study research offers the advantage of providing answers to "how" and "why" questions about current occurrences, such as the introduction of a new curriculum, over which researchers have little or no control, according to Yin (2003, in Solomon, 2004:7). Some of Solomon's ideas on how to use the case study technique in the implementation of the curriculum include:

> An investigation of experimental methodologies cannot fully explain the claimed causal relationships in real-life interventions. In other words, the explanations would show how the curriculum implementation affects how much students learn. It is essential to describe how the project was put into action and the context in which it occurred (Solomon, 2004:7).

Therefore, a case study type has been applied to this investigation. A qualitative case study type can be appropriate since the present study investigated issues related to practicum implementation with a specific focus on the Hossana College of Teacher Education, working in collaboration with six partner primary schools. In this case study, I made use of a detailed exploration of a single case rather than generalising about a population.

This current study was also an exploratory holistic single-case study by its nature that addresses "what" and "how" questions, as there is little empirical research on the pre-service practicum process and its implementation techniques in the teacher education colleges in the context of Ethiopia (Yin, 2003:22).

Two types of case studies are categorised (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2003), intrinsic and instrumental. An intrinsic case study focuses on learning from the case, and an instrumental case study focuses on learning about the issue or research questions (Stake, 1995:24). Learning from a case study is the primary goal of an intrinsic case study. In contrast, an instrumental case study seeks to provide insight into a particular problem or set of questions. The current research thus falls into the instrumental category, which means that I used the case study to understand the issue of the pre-service practicum process and its practices as well as how teachers and students make sense of their experiences.

4.4   METHODS OF RESEARCH

Patricia and Rangarjan (2013) explain that research methodology is the process by which data is collected, using a variety of research approaches to make judgements, build theories, identify problems and solve them. In this section, key factors that went into the study's conception and execution and the methodology employed are given. As mentioned earlier in the research process, I was able to show how strongly I believed in the study's potential by stressing how important it was to include all practicum participants' perspectives on their own life experiences, as well as the fact that the practicum was highly connected and took place in an institutional setting.

Therefore, as one of the strengths of qualitative analysis is looking at programme units holistically, the study involved selecting one case programme (Stake, 2005). The research was undertaken at the Hossana College of Teacher Education and six partner primary schools around the college, located in South Regional State, just 230 km from the Capital City of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa. Hossana College of Teacher Education opened in 2002 as a place to train teachers is considered one of the primary teacher education colleges in the region with its goal being to train teachers to teach Grades 1 through to 8.

Thus, the Hossana College of Teacher Education and its partner practicum schools were believed to be the settings where I and participants could learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of this research. This is because

of my preconceived understanding of the area as a trainer. The Hossana College of Teacher Education was selected as a representative case because of my easy access to detailed information about the programme. Merriam (1988) suggests that the researcher's presence within the case programme, and the interaction between the researcher and participants would ensure that the qualitative study has the potential to reveal rich contextual findings of a person's social and pedagogical nature, which other methods cannot quickly obtain. This allowed the researcher to critically reflect and undo errors made in the field. This, in turn, heightens "the internal credibility of the study" (Miles & Haberman, 1994:431). To sum up, the Hossana College of Teacher Education pre-service practicum setting was chosen on purpose because, as a staff member, (a) I had regular and easy access to trainees and resources, (b) I had access to documents and artifacts, and (c) I had contact with practitioner colleagues who would and could serve as informants.

The choice of one teacher education college practicum programme as a representative case, which Stenhouse (1981:103-114) calls a "return to close observation," allowed the researcher to use of multiple data collection tools, such as the semi-structured interview, observations, documents, and field notes, to collect enough data with a range of typical examples over time (Creswell, 2013:81; Stenhouse, 1981:103-114; Merriam, 1988:1-2). Thus, the methodology section of this study focused primarily on sampling technique, study participants, data gathering tools, data sources, and data analysis methodologies.

4.4.1 Sampling in qualitative research

Qualitative researchers frequently use purposeful sampling techniques to concentrate on the distinctive characteristics of a population, including groups and individuals, where the study's processes or objectives occur (Leedy & Ormrod 2014). According to Mogashoa (2014), purposive sampling involves the deliberate selection of cases that are deemed to be rich in information for the purpose of conducting an in-depth study of the subject being investigated. In order to obtain the most comprehensive and informative data to address the primary research inquiry, it is recommended to employ purposive sampling, which involves the deliberate selection

of participants (Creswell, 2007:33). The selection of participants is based on their possession of relevant information and their ability to provide the most comprehensive data to address the primary research inquiry (Dörnyei, 2007). The researcher exercises discretion in selecting subjects that are most likely to provide optimal information for addressing the research's rationale. The main objective of qualitative case study research is to obtain comprehensive insights from a deliberately chosen sample. However, it should be noted that the selected sample may not accurately represent the broader population, and the data collected may not be applicable to other contexts (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007:115).

As per my research, I opted to include six distinct categories of participants in the study: student teachers, cooperating teachers, teacher educators, deans, college practicum coordinators, and school principals. This decision was made based on the expectation that each group would offer unique insights into the process of teacher learning during the practicum. Furthermore, I intentionally chose all of my participants through purposive sampling (Johnson & Christensen, 2012:230). Stake (2005:451) suggests that in qualitative fieldwork, researchers should employ a purposive sampling strategy that incorporates diversity and recognizes prospects for in-depth examination. This approach may entail selecting the most convenient or most available participant for the study.

4.4.2 Participant Selection

In this section, the discussion involves choosing two types of participants: pilot and main study participants.

4.4.2.1 Participants

In this study, individuals were divided into two groups. Both pilot study and main research study participants are included here.

(i) Participants in the pilot study

Those who participated in the pilot study are indicated in the following table.

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Table 4.1: The sample for the pilot study

Schools/Institutes	Teacher Educators			Prospective Teachers			School Principals			School Mentors		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Hossana College of Teacher Education	2	-	2	2	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lereba Primary School	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	-	1
Wonjela Primary School	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	1

(Source: From field study by the researcher, 2021).

The people involved in this pilot study comprised three (3) third-year student-teachers who took part in actual teaching practicum, two (2) teacher-educators who took part in supervising trainees in the field, two (2) school directors from the two piloted schools, and two (2) school mentor teachers who work as cooperating teachers in Lereba Primary School and Wonjela Primary School. Nine (9) participants were chosen based on convenience and accessibility for pilot testing with the help of teacher-educators and school principals, but they were not included in the main study.

(ii) Main research participants

At the end of the pilot test, I contacted all participants in the college and placement schools to invite them to participate in the main study (Table 4.2). After gaining participants' consent, the main study could commence using the data collection tools.

Table 4.2: The sample for the main study

Schools/Institutes	Teacher Educators			Prospective Teachers			Academic Vice Dean			College Practicum Coordinator			School Principals			School Mentors		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Alemu W/Hana Primary School	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	1
Ambicho Primary School	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	1
Bobicho Primary School	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	-	1
Ersa Adada Primary School	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	1
Haile Bubamo Primary School	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	-	1
Hossana College of Teacher Education	3	2	5	6	4	10	1	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Masbira Primary School	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	1

(Source: From field study by the researcher, 2021).

The participants in the main study were the Academic Vice Dean of the college, five (5) college tutors (one from each stream), six (6) mentor teachers (one from each of the six cooperative or partner schools), six (6) school principals (one from each of the six partner schools), and ten (10) trainees from third-year trainees of the college (two from each of the five streams). In addition, I gathered additional information about the process of the practicum courses from the college practicum coordinator, whose responsibilities included facilitating school placement, preparing different formats, and organising training for school coordinators. The study, therefore, involved 29 participants in gathering views on a similar situation. A small sample size was preferred for three reasons. Firstly, the study required a closer look and a deeper inquiry than usual. Secondly, massive qualitative data would be generated from such a research sample for in-depth analysis. Thirdly, more time would be needed to determine how the people involved understand and think about implementing practicum programmes based on what they know and have seen (Nikolopoulou, K., 2022).

In all cases, the participants were selected purposefully (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 349; Merriam 2009:77), because I used to recruit participants who could provide in-depth and detailed information about the phenomenon under investigation (Polit and Beck, 2004:765). It should be noted that great care was taken to ensure that this selection of respondents did not affect the credibility and conformability of the research results. The choice of college tutors was based on consultation with the practicum coordinator. The practicum coordinator was asked to nominate five (5) teacher educators with rich experience working as college practicum supervisors, and ten (10) student teachers were selected purposefully. The student teachers were selected by considering their sex, academic discipline, and expressiveness in class using purposive sampling. They were also chosen by contacting department heads. Six (6) school mentors were selected based on the discussions with school heads. Only those school mentors who had mentoring experience were included in the study. The study also included six (6) school principals, who were tasked with the prime responsibility of the implementation of the practicum program at the placement school level.

The participant selection was purposeful. In my opinion, two major concerns were awaiting the trainees: acquiring theoretical knowledge from the college and applying it at placement schools. With this in mind, one informed tutor was selected from each academic stream and one more tutor from professional studies to obtain a holistic idea of the two inseparable entities.

4.4.3 Data Collection

As a researcher, I had to adhere to the Ethiopian government's COVID-19 protocols and regulations and the UNISA College of Education Ethics protocols. As researchers, we were under the COVID-19 protocols of social distancing, sanitising, and wearing masks, which had to be followed, adhered to, and observed when conducting fieldwork for research purposes. These protocols were communicated to participants. There were no perceived risks as the research was conducted with student-teachers, teacher educators, school principals and mentors who gave their informed consent and agreed to become research participants. During fieldwork for

conducting face-to-face interviews and observations, all COVID-19 lockdown protocols were followed, which ensured that all participants wore masks, adhered to social distancing; and all participants were sanitised, washed their hands, and measured temperature (not above 38˚ Celsius).

Thus, after receiving ethical clearance from the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee (see Appendix A), I obtained permission from the Hossana College of Teacher Education (see Appendix B) and the school principals and placement school mentors of the selected schools (see Appendix D) to conduct both the pilot study and the main study of the research process.

4.4.3.1   *Pilot study*

According to the research literature, a pilot study is essential to the research process being described as "the last preparation for data collection" by Yin (2003:77), which underlines its importance in helping researchers, refines their data gathering techniques and research objectives. In qualitative research, a pilot study is needed to find out if the interview design has flaws or needs to be changed before the study is put into action (Crossman, 2020; Kvale, 2007). Yin thinks that a pilot study will help "refine... data gathering strategies for both the content of data and the processes to be followed" (Yin, 2003:79). Pilot studies are often used to "test the research waters before diving in" (Sampson, 2004:399). Nunan (1992:151) suggests that interview questions should be tried out with a small group of people before they are used in an interview "because there may be problems with the use of the interview". Researchers, according to Nunan, will be able to determine if the questions produce relevant data. By doing so, it is possible to eliminate or revise questions that may confuse the interviewee. For the study, "it is essential that all elicitation devices are extensively piloted" (Nunan, 1992:151).

Yin (2003:79) states, "in general, easy access and geographical closeness can be the key reasons for picking the pilot case or cases". Therefore, based on convenience and accessibility, participants were chosen for pilot testing. During the Semester II practicum at Hossana College of Teacher Education and in two partner

primary schools, Lereba Primary School and Wonjela Primary School, a pilot test of the research methods was conducted from May 17 to June 30, 2021. This was done when student teachers were out for the last and fourth round of practicum (Prac.302) in the Semester II programme of the academic year from May to August 2021.

This pilot study was conducted for various specific purposes. The first was to identify items that could be difficult for respondents to understand or that could have vague meanings for respondents. The second reason was to know how much time the interview would require the student teachers to complete it so that a strategy could be designed as to how to implement it for the main study. The third reason was to check the credibility of the instrument for the study. The fourth reason was to test out the data analysis methods described in the research's methodology section and see if any unexpected trends could be added to the main study.

A pilot case study was conducted at the Hossana College of Teacher Education and its two partner placement schools, with the participation of teacher educators, school principals, school mentors, and student teachers with the same interests as those in the main study. As part of the pilot project, interviews with pre-selected individuals chosen by me were conducted. Convenience, accessibility, and proximity to the research site were the key considerations when selecting the pilot case study site and its participants. With the help of the pilot study, I was able to revise and review the interview questions to lead to answering the main research questions, meet the study's goals, and learn interviewing and conducting skills that will be useful during the main research process.

As participants were told to ask for clarification about any vague items they might not easily understand while being interviewed, some student teachers reported difficulties in giving responses to items referring to theoretically assumed practices that they had not seen or experienced in the programme; for example, compiling teaching portfolios and engaging in dialogue with cooperating teachers. Some respondents also had difficulty understanding the instructions given in the interview items. In addition, I used English language during interviewing student-teachers because I wanted to investigate their level of understanding of the content and

expressiveness. However, the student teachers could not adequately express themselves in English language, so I interviewed student teachers in Amharic in the main study.

I feared that the amount of time required for student teachers to respond to such a large number of items in the interview would affect the quality of the data to be collected. I attempted to estimate how much time the discussion would require with student teachers. The quicker interviews took 45 minutes and the slowest ones an hour. Interviews with teacher educators and school mentors ranged between 35-40 minutes.

Drawing on these experiences, I decided it would be safer to do two things for the main study. The first one was, beyond rephrasing the items in the interview for which the respondents were seeking help or clarification, including a prelude item to check whether or not the respondents had that type of experience before responding to the group of items and to tell them to respond to them only if they confirmed they had. With this knowledge and the data gathered from the pilot study, I could modify the interview questions which were unclear or complicated for the respondents to understand. Based on what was learned from the pilot study, the main changes and modifications to the interview process used in the main research process were made.

During this process, the first two purposes of the pilot study were achieved. I used what I had learned from the pilot study to help me find research participants for the main study and get them to agree to take part.

4.4.3.2   The process of data generation

During the course of this research, I collected data using interviews, observations, and documents. To this end, I obtained consent from the respective participants in the study. I informed them of the significance of the study, which may have an impact on them individually, and that the information gathered from them would be kept secure and used solely for educational purposes (Appendix E). Finally, the voluntary participants signed the consent at the end of information letter.

The data for the present study was acquired through multiple sources as suggested by Yin (2003). Most scholars agree (Merriam, 1988; Patton, 2002a; Stenhouse, 1981:103–114) that there are three ways to get information about a programme from different points of view: in-depth open-ended interviews, observation and document analysis. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:35) have also suggested that "qualitative case study evaluations collect data from in-person interviews, observations, and written documents". In this study, data gathering instruments comprised interviews, observation and document analyses to elicit detailed data about how the programme works and how the participants see its results and effects (Creswell, 2014: 234).

Semi-structured interviews in guided conversations were used to collect primary data (see Appendices F–I). Obervational data is recorded in an unstructured manner. Also, secondary data was gathered from written and recorded documents such as practicum guideline documents, practicum evaluation checklists, and portfolios, education policy documents such as the TESO framework for action and the new education road map, and teacher reports. Primary and secondary data were supported with field notes.

To sum up, this study aimed at generating qualitative data from its context in a naturalistic way. Hence, devices for capturing data should give access to the current practices of the implementation of pre-service practicum programmes. This requires entering the research setting with minimally pre-designed instrumentation. Thus, I opted for the participant observation method (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The type of participant observation adopted in this study corresponds to Denzin's take; it is a "field strategy that simultaneously combines document analysis, interviewing of respondents and informants, and direct participation and observation," Denzin (1989, in Flick 2018:139). Thus, semi-structured interviews, observing things as they happen, and gathering artifacts and documents were all used.

i) The Interview

In qualitative case studies, interviews are a significant source of information for understanding the subject under investigation (Kabir, 2016). This "live" form of data

collection, according to Cohen et al. (2007), involves taking notes during or after the interview.

One of the most crucial methods for doing qualitative research is the use of qualitative interviews (Johnson & Christensen, 2012:203; Myers & Newman, 2007). I conduct interviews with a small group of individuals to acquire qualitative data in order to understand their perspectives on a given concept, objective, or situation (Boyce & Neale, 2006:3). Qualitative research interviews also give the researcher access to people's opinions and shed light on personal parts of their lives because they "examine human existence in detail" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005:157).

This interview employed open-ended and semi-structured questions to let participants express their thoughts and feelings on their terms. One-on-one dialogue was the mode of operation (Ary, et al., 2006:480). Interviews are a great way to find out what people think and feel, especially when the researchers want to learn more about how they see an event or experience (Berg, 2004; Tylor & Bogdan, 1998).

Semi-structured interviews were administered in the form of person-to-person encounters (Kumar, 2011:145). I used the semi-structured interview method because it enabled me to outline flexible questions and probe more deeply for more clarity on the participants' answers. In other words, semi-structured interviews were used as a stepping stone in such a way to conduct discussion and elicit new questions and perspectives for further discussion (Bryman, 2016:468; Corpuz, 2011:55). The primary data-gathering instrument was a semi-structured interview addressing the strengths and weaknesses of the existing practicum implementation and the suggestions of significant stakeholders. I conducted the semi-structured interview with five (5) teacher educators (college tutors), ten (10) student teachers (the third-year student-teachers), one (1) practicum unit coordinator of the college, one (1) academic vice-dean of the college, six (6) primary school principals, and six (6) placement teachers (school-mentors) in the conventional style of every day interaction since this approach communicated empathy, encouragement and understanding easily (Alzaanin, 2014:55) (see table 4:3 of the interview schedule).

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Cohen et al. (2007) further expound, "Honestly, candor, depth, and authenticity of response are the hallmarks of validity in a semi-structured interview." (Corpuz, 2011:55; Wilkinson and Bhandarkar, 1999) added that semi-structured interviewing is crucial for uncovering underlying feelings, values, and how people perceive the world and situations that cannot be replicated. The semi-structured interviews are flexible and somewhat conversational (Alzaanin, 2014:55; Whitley, 1996:424) and allow for probing questions like... What do you mean when you say...? Can you tell me more about...? How long have you been...? Could you explain that...? Could you give me an example of ------? When clarification and a further explanation are needed.

The interview questions guided by the research questions in Chapter one, concentrated on the strengths and weaknesses of practicum implementation and guidelines, suggestions for improvement, roles of stakeholders, and structural set-ups required for the practicum. The interview was intended to gather data on the lessons from the existing practicum implementation and areas that would need further improvement. All discussions were tape-recorded based on the permission and consent of the participants (Punch, 2005:168; Silverman, 2010:288). With the exceptions of college teacher educators and college deans, all the interviews were conducted in the Amharic language with other participants, which were transcribed carefully and then translated into English.

ii) Unstructured Observation

In addition to the interviews, I also performed observations for various reasons. As highlighted in previous studies, qualitative research relies heavily on direct observation as a data source (Creswell, 2012:33). According to Gerring (2007:20), "an observation is the most fundamental component of every empirical endeavor". Research in the social and behavioural sciences relies heavily on observation, as stated by Adler and Adler (1994:389, in Angrosino, 2005:729). Researchers did not only rely on the student teachers' reports since they saw what they were doing in action.

Since individuals attach different meanings to a particular observed phenomenon, obtaining objective data does not escape criticism of subjective bias. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), observations can only be considered reliable if they are contextualized within the shared social realities of the observer and the observed. In support of this, Amare (2004) said it best when there is no independent observer.

In order to investigate the current pre-service practicum practices in light of the constructivist teacher education framework, which is the task of this study, it was necessary to directly and naturally observe behavior and actions/interactions to encompass how well the involved parties act and interact to achieve the desired end (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:43-44). Consequently, two types of unstructured observation were determined to be relevant (Bernard, 1995).

First, I engaged in what is known as "naturalistic observation," which entails making no attempts to influence the outcomes of acts or encounters. In an inconspicuous and unstructured fashion, I collected notes describing my observations of the student teachers' behaviors and interactions with one another in the research environment (Holliday, 2002). Data was gathered for things like trainee assessment, supervision, feedback style, pre- and post-lesson reflections, issue and interest management, values, worries, gaps, wants, and needs, as well as an understanding of the practicum and how to teach and be taught. Passive observations are manually recorded. Data was shared informally by student teachers, teacher educators, and cooperating teachers as it emerged from classroom activities (for example, in the staff lounge, during arguments or discussions on the bus, where I took notes or ran commentaries on what was going on). There were moments when detailed notes were taken (Bernard, 1995). The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which student teachers internalize the perspectives of their cooperating teachers and teacher educators.

I stayed with the research participants (student teachers, college tutors, and mentors) in the natural setting where the investigation occurred (that is, Semester II of the academic year). This semester was chosen because it was at this time that teacher educators (tutors) were assigned to the tutoring programme. Thus, as an

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observer or an insider of the research, I observed ten (10) student teachers and watched their actions and how the placement teachers (school mentors) and college tutors supported them. The student teachers were observed, and their actions, thoughts, and conversations were described without drawing attention to themselves. This study focused on the students' lessons, roles, concerns, lack thereof, needs, and desires. For instance, I recorded in-depth descriptions of their conversations about pre-class preparation strategies in the staff lounge. These inconspicuous accounts formed the backbone of the data used to better comprehend the subjects' presumptions and perspectives on their routines.

Second, I was asked to conduct two rounds of full observation of post-teaching conferences, during which I recorded my observations and made any necessary commentary on the events that transpired (see Table 4.3). In order to learn more about the feedback style, pre- and post-lesson reflections, and evaluations that are part of the practicum, detailed accounts of what teacher educators did and talked about with their student teachers were written down. The table below shows the schedule of interviews and observations conducted with the research participants.

Table 4.3: Schedule of interviews and observations

Participants	Name	Wk 1 12-16th July.	Wk 2 19-23rd July	Wk 3 26-30th July	Wk 4 2-6th Aug.	Wk 5 9-13th Aug.	Wk 6 16-20th Aug	Wk 7 23-27th Aug.	Wk 8 Aug.30-Sept.3rd	Wk 9 6-10th Sept.	Wk10 13-17th Sept.
School Mentors	DA	Int. 12th									
	H.M.	Int. 14th									
	MM	Int. 16th									
	ZT		Int. 19th								
	TA.		Int. 21st								
	AS		Int. 23rd								
School Principals	EH			Int. 26th							
	JN			Int. 28th							
	AH			Int. 30th							
	KM				Int. 2nd						
	EH				Int. 4th						
	HA				Int. 6th						
Student-teachers	TA		Obs.1 20th			Int. 9th Obs.2 10th					
	GA				Obs. 1 5th	Int. 11th Obs.2 12th					
	SB			Obs.1 27th		Int. 13th	Obs.2 17th				
	MA		Obs.1 22nd				Int. 16th Obs.2 19th				
	EE	Obs. 1 15th					Int. 18th	Obs. 2 24th			
	SK				Obs. 1 3rd		Int. 20th	Obs. 2 26th			
	HL	Obs. 1 15th						Int. 23rd			Obs. 2 16th
	HE			Obs.1 29th				Int. 25th			Obs. 2 13th
	EA		Obs.1 22nd					Int. 27th		Obs. 2 7th	
	ST	Obs.1 13th							Int. 30th Obs.2 2nd		
College Tutors	WE								Int.1st		
	ET								Int. 3rd		
	MS									Int. 6th.	
	ED									Int. 8th	
	KA									Int. 10th	
College Deans and coordinators	AH										Int. 15th
	TF										Int. 17th

(Source: From field study by the researcher, 2021).

To support the interviews and the observation, analysis was also conducted on relevant documents pertaining to the practicum programme.

iii) Document review

Different documents were investigated on the implementation of the practicum programme (Cohen et al., 2007:123);

a. Practicum Evaluation Checklist For the practicum course evaluation: The practicum evaluation checklist applied to practicum IV was collected from the college practicum unit and analysed in light of the assumptions and goals of the programme (See Appendix J-N);

b. Sample Portfolios: Ten portfolios compiled by ten student-teachers were reviewed to see what they were doing in light of the assumptions and goals of the ongoing practicum programme. Portfolio assessment was added as a way to collect data because student teachers worried during the ongoing interview that portfolio assessment was an important part of their learning that was not getting enough attention (see the assessment checklist in Appendix O).

c. Cooperating teachers' report: Though cooperating teachers were supposed to write reports on the performance of the practicing student teachers and send them to the department, I found that the reports were written by the school coordinators, not by the respective cooperating teachers. So, ten reports written by the six school coordinators in the six partner schools about the same ten student teachers' performances were collected and their contents investigated in light of the proposed features of the constructivist theory of learning and the literature review;

d. The TESO Educational Policy Document;

e. The practicum guideline documents for the primary schools; and

f. The policy documents of the new Educational road map.

Additional documentary sources such as course catalogues and policy documents were also used to gather additional data for the study, including assessment forms

for students' practicum courses and portfolios and reviews from teachers. Using these materials, I could better understand the pre-service practicum programme's implementation processes and practices. This research relied a lot on policy documents like the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy (ETP), the Ethiopian Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP), and many other papers of this kind that provided extensive and thorough contextual information for this study. Information on the goals and objectives of a pre-service practicum can be found in the frameworks, guidelines, and other associated papers. Yin (2003:87) says that the most important way documents are used in case studies is to back up and add evidence from other sources.

Collecting and analysing documents about the practicum programme would show the institutional conditions that challenge the running of the Hossana College of Teacher Education practicum programme.

The information that was gathered on the documents mentioned was organised and evaluated. These documents which serve as data were categorised according to classified themes. Qualitative case studies use various data collection methods, including documents, so I utilised them for cross-checking what was stated in the documents with what is practised in the actual context. Field notes were also used to substantiate the relevance of the evidence obtained through interviews, observations and written documents. It is good to know that researchers can get a better, more accurate picture of reality by looking at things from three different points of view (Berg, 2004).

Thus, the data collection took me nearly three months (July 12 to September 17, 2021) at the research site to gather the data for the study. It took an extended period because many parties are involved in the practicum from the college and placement primary schools which demanded extra time to conceptualise the practicum as perceived and experienced by research partners and/or understand the problem by personally engaging with research partners. The other reason was that the practicum was scheduled at different times for student teachers in different years, which made it challenging to do the job as planned.

4.4.4   Data Analysis

As previously explained I compiled a data set from the results of interviews, notes from fieldwork observations and selected documents. Research methodology literature (see Braun & Clarke, 2006; Dörnyei, 2007; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Lichtman, 2006) uses words like 'rigorous', 'chaotic', 'difficult', 'messy', 'complicated', and 'iterative' to characterise the process of making sense of such a vast data set. Since qualitative research necessitates an iterative methodology and interim analyses, the data analysis in this study began at "the beginning of the research inquiry" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:199). They were an essential and continuous part of the research throughout the data analysis process. Organising the field notes, transcribing the audiotapes or electronically capturing the interviewees' responses, and writing up the findings were all done in this process (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015:96; Baxter & Jack, 2008:24).

The use of theme analysis is something I want to emphasise right away. Braun and Clarke (2006:84; 2013:17) define thematic analysis as a method for identifying, examining, and reporting patterns (themes) in data. The data set is briefly organised and richly described. However, it often goes beyond this and interprets different facets of the research issue. Different methods for thematic analysis have been proposed in several research publications and papers, among those already mentioned. With their advice in mind, I conducted my study using a four-step process involving the following procedures, which include: data transcription, re-examining the information and making a note of my first impressions, data coding and generating a report, each of which are described below.

4.4.4.1   Data transcription

As part of the data collection procedure, I transcribed the interviews as they were taking place. The outcome was that I had completed transcriptions of all the interviews by the time I left the field. Field notes and the electronic recorder data were transcribed, typed, and made available in print. Some of the interview responses were given in Amharic; as a result, the data includes translations of those responses. To guarantee that the translation was accurate and consistent with the

language, some of it was given to an English specialist for assessment. While conducting the observations, I transcribed all my notes into a computer file. Whenever a researcher has recorded data, the first stage in analysing that data is called transcription (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Dörnyei, 2007). It was my choice to put 'all' I could think of into writing. There are two main reasons why I did this: Because I was unsure of how crucial each assumption was at the time of the analysis, I was hesitant to take any risks (including, you know, well, I mean, and so on). Secondly, I thought the data might be helpful if I included it in future classes or articles. Dörnyei's (2007) comments convinced me that this transcription method was the best way to grasp my data, mainly since I performed all the transcriptions myself. Although it took up to three months after my fieldwork was completed for transcription, the process was not only lengthy but extremely valuable. Next, I had to look over the information again and write down my first thoughts.

4.4.4.2 Re-examining and noting first impressions

As I had learned from my review of the research methodology literature, the next step was to read each transcript. The first thing I did was quickly scan through them to gain an overview of the data and make some quick notes. Finally, I got rid of all the background noise that wasn't contributing anything to the data. Then, I replicated the data into new files and made the necessary changes. Phrases and words like *yes, mmm, then, you know, like, as in* and *indeed* were eliminated. Even though I considered the data to have a specific tone or significance, I did not remove the statements. To become familiar with the data, I used pre-coding to eliminate unnecessary words and phrases (Dörnyei, 2007:250). It was not long before I realised other issues that the evidence indicated. According to Dörnyei, the pre-coding reflections affect researchers' knowledge of the data and determine how they will go about coding it.

4.4.4.3 Coding of data

The phrases 'coding', 'categories' and 'themes' all refer to different ideas, according to Creswell and Dörnyei, and it has been suggested that the terms used to describe other parts of coding are interchangeable. In light of this, I must admit that I have

employed Dörnyei's (2007:250) definition of "coding" in my research. To him, coding is the process of highlighting and labelling specific sections of transcribed data so they can be conveniently accessible or categorised. Therefore, when I talk about a 'code', I mean a label assigned to a subset of data that I highlighted and arranged in a certain way to make a point pertinent to my study. In this analysis, the words 'category' and 'theme' are used interchangeably. Interview transcripts from student teachers, whom I deemed the study's most important subjects, came first when I started classifying my data. Data from teacher educators, cooperating teachers, principals of public schools, college deans and a college practicum coordinator were coded after the student teacher interview data were completed. I utilised the codes I generated from the student teachers' transcripts, supplementing them with new codes where appropriate (as explained below). I did all my data analysis manually and did not use any software during the coding process. The major reason is that I could not find training materials for the tools I needed to start processing data, such as Atlas Ti.

During the coding procedure, I used Microsoft Word to store each transcript individually, and I gave each one a unique identifier, such as "TA" stands for Tariku's interview. Before proceeding with observational or documentary data, I decided to code interview data in a manner that was more or less conclusive. As a result of my accumulation of extra data that appeared to exceed the study's parameters, the quantity of data has fallen dramatically. In order to answer the study questions, we first categorised the subjects, categories, and data that fell under them. I re-analysed the data in light of the emerging themes and created new codes to reflect the meanings behind the data subsets. Also, I compiled data that did not fit the emerging classifications, themes, or codes. After that, I coded the observation notes and documents using the themes, categories, and codes that emerged from the interview data and were typically consistent between the two.

My analysis of interview data yielded a set of codes, categories, and themes that were generally consistent with what I saw in the observational and documentary data. So, I reorganized all the codes into new groupings (sub-themes and main themes) and then into groups according to the study questions.

4.4.4.4   Generating a report

After regrouping the data, I assessed the coding and the entire text, and after a thorough analysis, I regrouped and banked several portions. I then began crafting a narrative in which I attempted to make sense of the material for the reader. I retained some of the information as citations while paraphrasing most of it. This technique entailed relocating some parts further, demoting some (sub-themes or categories) to the level of codes, and raising other codes to the rank of sub-themes. While it was important to make sure the many themes tied together well, it was equally crucial to give each theme its own identity so that it could function independently. The data inside themes should strongly align with one another, although Braun and Clarke (2006:91) argue that themes should be kept apart. It was also necessary to move back and forth throughout this period, occasionally returning to the bank or the initial data. In addition, I reviewed the document multiple times and made numerous modifications. I finished this step by writing the first report of the findings in Chapter five, mostly based on the research questions but with a few changes.

Thus, it is essential to explain that the reports of the findings are produced thematically. There are no clear-cut mechanical procedures to follow for qualitative data analysis. Since this study was mainly qualitative, thematic analysis and narrative descriptions were used to analyse the data in this case study, in harmony with *reflective analysis,* through which I invested intuition and personal judgement to get the complete picture of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2013:17). By putting the data into major themes, things like the practicum's length, how it is set up, the roles of college supervisors and mentors, the professional skills and qualities of mentors, how the practicum is evaluated and the professional skills that need to be learned during the practicum, were examined.

Lastly, the interview, observation, documentary and field observation data were looked at in light of real-world and theoretical evidence. Then, the lessons learned from the study were summed up so that they could be used as a basis for the future development of practicum implementation. Finally, the generalisations were looked at in light of constructivist learning theories.

4.4.4.5 Lessons learned from data analysis

This section concludes by briefly outlining a few things I learned from analysing the data. First, I realized that the process of analysing qualitative data is definitely iterative. The steps are not as linear (there are a lot of back and forth movements) as I made them sound in the previous paragraphs. Second, I pointed out, as many scholars have indicated, that data analysis is a somewhat demanding, drawn-out and untidy process. As previously stated, it took me approximately nine months from the time the data were generated to complete the transcription process and generate the initial report. Despite this, I often had to go back to the original data when writing up my findings. Third, in my experience, doing data analysis requires reading a lot of research materials, like books, journals, and research papers or thesis, to find out what other researchers have done and what they suggest. Because of the lesson, I came up with a consistent way to analyse, which helped me at different points.

It was also essential to engage with other researchers to ensure that the coding process follows a logical path, that the themes were clearly defined, and that the narrative emerged as a whole. To ensure that my coding and narrative were consistent, I asked other research students to read through sample transcripts. My supervisor was naturally involved in this consultation process, and I had to make several changes due to their advice. Getting feedback from my peers and readers helped me become more aware of how to structure my analysis to make sense to a broader readership. A precise plan of action was necessary to avoid losing concentration, as learned from my own experience. To accomplish this, I used theme analysis to analyse my data. This was an essential factor in my success. Even though data analysis is time-consuming, I discovered that completing even the most tedious stages gave me a greater sense of accomplishment in my study and increased my self-esteem as a qualitative researcher in general.

4.5 MEASURES OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

A research method is considered trustworthy to the degree that it is reliable, careful and rigorous enough to substantiate its assertions (see Cohen, Manion & Morrison ,

2007:122; Creswell, 2014: 251; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Lichtman, 2006; McMillan and Schumacher, 2014: 354). 'Internal validity', 'external validity', 'reliability', and 'objectivity' have all been employed in the past to demonstrate the validity of a research project. Alternative terms such as 'believability,' 'transferability,' 'dependability,' and 'conformability' are suggested by qualitative researchers (Creswell, 2012; Kumar, 2011:184). The reason for this shift in terminology is that in constructivist-interpretivist qualitative research, trustworthiness is judged differently than it is in the realist-positivist paradigm and the quantitative approach, where the previous phrases are primarily used (see Creswell & Miller, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). These are the definitions of terms, according to Creswell and Miller (2000:125-126):

> Regarding validity, the constructivist or interpretive viewpoint emerged between 1970 and 1987 and is still evident in today's views. As a group, constructivists believe that reality is multifaceted and open-ended; they are also sensitive to context and location. This way of thinking says that the criteria for validity have names that differ from the names of quantitative techniques. For example, trustworthiness can be called credibility, transferability, dependability, or conformability.

Even so, it is important to keep in mind the basic problems that arise when the terms validity and reliability are used to judge the quality of any research, even qualitative research, which should be taken into consideration, according to all the researchers mentioned above, even though the terminology used and the techniques used to ensure its rigor may vary. I utilise the terms 'believability', 'transferability', 'dependability' and 'conformability' under these perspectives and the constructivist-interpretations paradigm within which I operate. However, I show how my definitions are compatible with those of common terminology so that readers of my thesis—especially those from my environment—who are not familiar with qualitative language can understand my justifications. After giving full definitions of these terms in a table (see Table 4.4 below) based on research (see Creswell & Miller, 2000; Gillham, 2000; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Mason, 2002; Yin, 2003), I explain in

the form of a table (see Table 4.4 below) and then discuss how I saw them in this study.

Table 4.4: The meanings of the phrase 'trustworthiness'

Qualitative Research	Quantitative Research	Meaning
Credibility	Internal Validity	How thoroughly the study analyses and a report on what happened in the field is unclear.
Transferability	External Validity	This refers to how easily and broadly the research findings can be applied in different situations (contexts).
Dependability	Reliability	This refers to the same results if the experiment is done again. data that stays the same over time and in different places;
Conformability	Objectivity	What is the researcher's level of objectivity, and how much does this affect the results?

(Source: Desta, 2022)

4.5.1   Credibility

Numerous techniques were used to address the issue of credibility (Polit & Beck, 2014). As advised in the literature, I first enlisted the assistance of colleagues and experienced researchers to assess my central concepts, methodologies, and analyses to ensure their legitimacy (see Mason, 2002; Stake, 2006). This type of feedback was provided at every level to ensure that I stayed on track and did all that was required to meet the study's stated objectives. I followed the triangulation principles to make sure I had access to several in-depth viewpoints on student teacher practices and the type of assistance, which were the primary issues of interest in this research (see Creswell, 2014: 251; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Stake, 2005). Stake (2005:453) explains that triangulation "has often been conceived of as a technique to employ several senses to clarify meaning, establish that an observation may be repeated, and explain".

The information I gathered came from six groups of people who worked together throughout the practicum: student teachers, cooperating teachers, school principals, college practicum coordinators, college deans and teacher educators. This meeting confirmed all the issues highlighted in teaching practice, which gave me a chance to hear from a variety of relevant participants (Hilton and Hilton, 2020). Furthermore, it was possible to check the information that teacher educators and student teachers provided about practice preparation and supervision methods. Yin (2003:98) suggests that the conclusions of a case study would be "much more accurate and convincing" if they were based on different sources and then backed up by other evidence.

I could explore various aspects of the phenomenon (teaching practice) through three methods of data collection (interviews, observations, and documents) (Hilton and Hilton, 2020). In qualitative case studies, it is highly recommended to use this type of triangulation technique (see Giliham, 2000; Yin, 2003). According to Gillham (2000:20), I should seek numerous forms of evidence, including statements made by individuals, actions taken and documents and records produced. I also built a proof chain through numerous observations and interviews to investigate and validate or disprove earlier findings (see Creswell & Milner, 2000; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 354). I could ask student teachers about specific aspects of their practice that I had noticed and confirm the consistency of what they had previously mentioned during the follow up interviews, for example. It also allowed me the opportunity to go over important ideas that I might not have covered well enough in earlier sessions.

The research literature also suggests the use of member checking to improve the credibility of research results (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This means giving participants copies of the research report to check that their participation has been appropriately recorded (see Candela, 2019: 619; Creswell & Milner, 2000; Stake, 1995). To find out more, I showed the participants their transcripts and notes from the observations, which they confirmed were correct. I later gave the participants parts of the chapters I had written about the results. Three pre-service teachers, one cooperating educator and three college teachers received these drafts. Despite several attempts to get a

response, just one teacher educator said that the report was "clear and correct" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014).

4.5.2   Transferability

The degree to which research findings may be applicable or (to use a more common term) generalisable to different contexts is typically referred to as transferability (Ferdinand, 2019; Kumar, 2011:185; Richards, 2009). Because other people have different ideas about what kinds of generalisations may be made, the question of transferability in case study research seems challenging. Some scholars have argued that it is unethical to conclude case studies and/or qualitative research (see Creswell, 2007; Gillham, 2000; Richards, 2003). Richards (2003:10) states that "the power of qualitative research may be argued to arise from its capability to reflect the specific, and that this distinguishes it from other types of research which depend on generalisability". Since there are usually too many facets that are unique to the group or organisation, Gillham (2000:6) argues that it is difficult to generalise human behaviour because each group or organisation has its own unique characteristics. For instance, something that applies to one school might not apply to another.

Despite this, some researchers believe it is possible to make some generalisations. Analytical generalisations can be made from data collected in different situations, as suggested by Yin (2003:53). There are sure to be differences between the two cases. However, if one can still conclude both, it will significantly increase the external generalisability of the findings compared to just one. All the participants in my study had similar patterns regarding some areas of their teaching practicum. Different schools had similar feelings about how student teachers taught and how much they had grown. They also worked with cooperating teachers and supervised their student teachers in the same way.

Based on these similarities, it is possible to draw conclusions. Bassey (1999:12) claims it is possible to draw a generalisation from a single case study. According to him, generalisations like this "arise from studies of singularities and often suggest that it is feasible, likely, and/or unlikely that what was found in the singularity will be

found in similar settings elsewhere". As Stake (1995) points out, this opens the possibility that case study readers may make 'naturalistic generalisations' about them. It is common for people who are curious about a situation to make generalisations based on previous experiences.

Ultimately, it was not my intention to generalise to the entire context of teaching practicum in Ethiopia, as this would contradict the qualitative case study (see Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995). As Creswell (2007:74) says, "Since each case has a unique context, qualitative researchers often avoided making generalisations about one example to another". Furthermore, Stake (1995:8) underlines that "the fundamental objective of a case study is particularisation, not generalisation" and that "we do not select case study designs to maximise the creation of generalisations". But I think that the results of my study can be used by other people with pre-service practicums in Ethiopia and other places that are similar.

4.5.3   Dependability

According to (Kumar, 2011:185; Richards, 2009:159), "Dependability in qualitative research requires an analysis of the context and the procedures employed to produce the data". Yin (2003:38) suggests that making explicit and thorough explanations of the processes used in the case study is one strategy to increase reliability. He states, "The typical approach to the reliability problem is to operationalise as many stages as feasible and to conduct research as if someone were always watching our back". Care has been taken to thoroughly describe the complete research procedure so that, if necessary, a comparable study could be conducted in another environment. This is done to ensure the dependability of my work (Ponterotto, 2006). Ponterotto (2006:543-547) says that the term "thick description" comes from Ryles (1949) and Geertz (1973), and he explains what it means by putting together many different points of view:

> Participants' lived experiences must be combined with the researchers' interpretations of the data in an adequately described discussion section to provide a context for the study's findings. The researcher

must also give enough information about the study's setting and methods so that the results can be understood (Ponterotto, 2006:543).

Case study research can be reliable if "a considerable body of description" is used, according to Stake (1995:110). When we could observe and record as much as we did, nearly everyone would have noticed and recorded as much as we did about the situation. As a result, I have gone into great depth in this study to ensure that the context, the rationale derived from the literature review and the data production and analysis are all clear to the reader. In addition, I have included actual quotes from the participants to back up my results (see Chapter Five). Another benefit of conducting a pilot study was that it revealed shortcomings in the data collection method, which allowed me to make improvements and make the study more reliable. I also looked at the data in a way that can be used again in future research.

4.5.4   Conformability

Qualitative case study research has been questioned as to whether or not its findings may be used to influence policy in the future, if and when appropriate. How impartial or unbiased is the researcher, and how much impact does s/he have on the findings? (Flyvbjerg, 2008; Irene & Albine, 2018; Van Wynsberghe & Khan, 2007). So many authors are now advocating for researchers to acknowledge their role in the research and admit any influence they may have had on the outcome of their findings (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018:130). When Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:18) pointed out that even though researchers may have a hand in their research, they do not discount the validity of the results. They contend that researchers' sway could be beneficial to them but that it should be limited. These authors say that people's reactions to the researcher's presence may be as instructive as their reactions to other settings.

Aside from this, Gillham (2000:18) points out that researchers carry their preconceptions and opinions regarding issues into the fieldwork exercise, just like all humans do. He claims that many preconceived notions cloud our vision and limit our ability to see new ideas. At the beginning of their research, the researcher should be

aware of their own biases and try to have an 'open mind', he advises. Rather than attempting to eliminate the researcher's impacts, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:18) argue that "we should set about understanding them". Richards (2009:160) says that conformability depends on making the data available to the reader, which in turn depends on how clearly the data are shown. Researchers have tried to answer the question of neutrality by including as many of the opinions and points of view of the participants as they can in their reports.

As I was collecting data for my study, I acknowledged and discussed some of the perspectives I had about the topic of the study that I had formed while conducting the research itself. My position and status also helped my data collection progress more smoothly than it otherwise would have. As a college teacher educator in the Ethiopian research region, I am familiar with several school administrators and mentor teachers in the schools where the student teachers completed their practicum. As a result, I could reach the schools and connect with them rapidly while data were being generated.

4.6   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations must be taken into account when doing research in all circumstances. According to the principles of research ethics, researchers must tell the truth, provide participants with complete information about the study, protect their privacy and anonymity, ensure that no damage comes from the study and show gratitude to participants in any way they see fit (see Arifin, 2018:30-33; Cohen et al., 2007; Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018; Steffen, 2016).

As a first step, I applied for a research permit from the College of Education at the University of South Africa (UNISA). On May 12, 2021, the UNISA College of Education's Ethical Review Committee approved an ethics application for this research with reference No. 2021/05/12/67135455/AM (see Appendix A). Secondly, I had to obtain authorisation from the college to include student teachers and teacher educators in my research (see Appendix B). I also acquired an official letter of cooperation from the college, which stated that I could work with different education

offices and primary schools to get the research materials and educational policy documents I needed, as well as talk to teachers, school administrators, or anyone else who was relevant (see Appendices C-D).

It is important to note that all cited sources are recognised, participants were treated appropriately and their privacy was adequately respected in this study. This research's ethical implications and practicalities were examined in depth as part of creating an ethics application. To be effective, the research must be safe for participants and benefit those who participate in it. Additionally, it documented how stakeholders would be treated under the ethical and legal standards of conduct outlined in the application. There can be no doubt that informed consent is at the core of research ethics (McName & Bridges, 2002:2). Arifin (2018:30-33) and Johnson and Christensen (2012) met the need for informed consent by giving out long information sheets (see Appendix E).

Interviews have an ethical component, focus on interpersonal interaction and reveal information about the human condition. In recognition of these factors, I created a consent form that both the interviewees and I had to sign after carefully reading and coming to an understanding (Appendix E). The form had a list of the organisations that will take part in the study, as well as the study's goals, problems to be solved, methods for collecting data and sources of data.

As part of the interview process, participants were made aware of what was expected of them and that they had the option of withdrawing from the study at any time, even if it had already begun. In addition, it was made clear that individuals' anonymity and/or the confidentiality of their data were safeguarded where necessary. In the same way, students who participated in the interview could share their thoughts regarding the study's goals and objectives through oral communication and their involvement was voluntary. According to their information, those who did not want to participate might opt out at any moment. In the course of their interviews, they were able to discuss this subject with the interviewer.

I, therefore, gave particular consideration to ethical principles developed by different researchers, particularly regarding informed consent, developing confidentiality, and other related ethical issues (Arifin, 2018:30-33; Hesse-Biber, 2016). Therefore, to secure sufficient and pertinent data collection, attention was given to ethical issues before, during, and after data collection. In short, to make them feel free about any possible risk, I openly negotiated with research participants, and their views were audiotaped accordingly. I also followed the ethical guidelines set out by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee and described in Ethical Clearance. I did this while trying to determine what the research participants wanted by talking to them about the guidelines (see Appendix E).

In the beginning, I contacted all student teachers and set up individual meetings to explain the facts of my research and how I hoped they would get involved. In Appendix E, I explained the following issues in terms of research ethics:

1. I received permission from the college to include them in my research, and if they had taken part, it did not have change the results of their teaching practice.
2. During the three months that they were doing their teaching practicum, I talked to them and watched them teach.
3. It was their choice whether or not they wanted to participate in the study; if they agreed to be audio recorded, I asked them to sign a consent form.
4. Despite my best efforts to keep them engaged, I made it clear that they might withdraw at any time and would not be held responsible for their decision.
5. The information they gave me was private and would not be shared with anyone, not even the college or schools.
6. I used pseudonyms to protect their privacy in my report. Some of the data may be published, but only for academic purposes.
7. If they took part in the study, it would be assumed that they were comfortable with the data being used in a paper.
8. I would be happy to share my notes and audio recordings with them if they would like to do so.

9. I would show them a few places in the draft of the report where they were mentioned and ask them to confirm that I had cited them correctly.

10. I would not pay them to participate in the study, but I would cover their bus tickets and pay for their meals when we met outside the schools. They should not expect me to modify their instruction or give them advice because that is not what I am here for, and it could go against their teachers' desires.

After securing the permission of the student teachers, I went to the six schools in question, handed them a letter of cooperation, and spoke with the principals. When I approached and explained my research, they agreed to allow me to observe and interview student teachers and their cooperating teachers at their respective schools. After I explained how they would help with the research, all of the teachers who agreed to take part were in agreement. Lastly, I assure that there was no evidence of potential conflict of interest in the research process.

4.7   SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

My study's data gathering and analysis process has been described in this chapter. The study's main epistemological assumptions and the rationale behind methodological and design decisions have been explained in detail. In summary, this research is based on the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm, founded on the epistemological tenet of social construction of reality. Ten student teachers, five teacher educators, one college academic vice-dean, a college practicum, and school linkage unit coordinator, six cooperating teachers, and six placement school principals were selected purposefully for the project. It was my responsibility to ensure that the appropriate ethical considerations were considered. I conducted semi-structured interviews and unstructured observations to gather information from the participants and reviewed documents. Triangulation, a chain of proof, and a detailed explanation established the report's reliability. Those findings are detailed in the next section. This preface summarises the methodology employed, data gathering approaches, and an overview of the outcomes. Many generalisations can be drawn from the data in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1   INTRODUCTION

The aim and objectives of this study were to understand the views and experiences of pre-service practicum programme participants at the Hossana College of Teacher Education based on the assumptions of the constructivist theory of learning. As a result, this chapter, guided by the objectives of the study and following the procedures detailed in the methodology, deals with the analysis and interpretation of the data. The empirical data was gathered and supplied for the case study on the pre-service practicum at a teacher education college in Ethiopia.

Data analysis from interviews with teacher educators, deans, practicum coordination unit heads, school administrators, placement teachers, and student-teachers, as well as observations of college students at the research sites, provides support for the empirical findings in this chapter. There were a small number of participants, and the objective was to determine the relevance of how the practicum at the Hossana College of Teacher Education and six partner primary schools was conducted in light of the constructive teacher education framework.

An investigation into practicum implementation issues was the primary focus of this study. Data gathered through multiple methods were analysed using thematic analysis. During the investigation, attention was also paid to connecting themes to anticipated standards. In addition, my supervisory experiences were factored into the data analysis. The findings emerging from the analysed data are presented and supported with quotes taken directly from participants and supplemented with an account by the researcher.

To sum up, the qualitative thematic analysis method was used to discover what the interviews, observations, document analysis, and field notes with participants meant. An attempt was made to group responses into significant classifications. The data were sorted and grouped into various categories and themes using the procedure

described in Chapter 4. Table 5.1 below shows the thematic areas and categories found using the framework analysis procedure.

Table 5.1: Analysis themes and categories

Themes
1. Key stakeholders' beliefs and experiences about the purposes of practicum
2. Key stakeholders' practices of constructivist theory of learning in the pre-service practicum
3. The support and guidance provided to the student teachers
4. The partnership between teacher education institutes and partner schools
5. The status of the enabling environment
6. Tasks and activities that contributed to the incongruence between the practicum programme practices and the assumptions and goals of the programme • Portfolio construction tasks • Tasks in teaching conferences • Assessment practices in practicum
7. Participants' Roles • Roles of student teachers • Roles of cooperating teachers • Teacher educator roles
8. Post-teaching conferences • Classroom management • Lesson plans and observation forms • Subject-specific pedagogy
9. Data from document review • School report • Checklist for evaluating a school report practicum • Student teaching practicum portfolios • Practicum guidelines documents

(Source: Desta, 2022)

All data segments were classified into the relevant category using a single-case analysis approach. Narratives and vignettes were then used to present the data. My experience and reflection have been incorporated into the data interpretation process (Aldridge, 2018:246). Due to the importance of providing the main theme and supporting the thesis's final interpretation, a thematic approach to data collection, analysis, and presentation was used for this project. Several factors influence the creation of themes, including the researcher's ideas and ideals (Punch, 2009). Even though different interpretations were possible, the decision was helped

by how well the study fit with other research and how the same themes kept emerging.

5.2 BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

5.2.1 Profiles of Deans, Practicum Coordinators, and Teacher Educators (Hosanna College of Teachers Education)

The table below lists the responders' biographies; one was a teacher educator, the other two were deans and practicum coordinators.

Table 5.2: Provides details on the gender, position, experience, and credentials of deans, practicum coordinators, and teacher educators:

Teacher Educators (Pseudonyms)	Gender	Age	Work experience	Qualification	Position	Stream
Wondowsen Eshete	M	41	19	M.A.	Lecturer	Language
Ewenetu Tegegne	M	48	25	M.Sc.	Lecturer	Science and Mathematics
Mencha Solomon	M	36	13	M.A.	Lecturer	Social Sciences
Erdolo Daniel	M	42	19	M.A.	Lecturer	Professional Sciences
Kibemo Addise	M	34	12	M.Sc.	Lecturer	Aesthetics and Sport Sciences
Abreham Haile	M	44	21	M.A	Academic Vice-Dean	Professional Sciences
Teketel Fitamo	M	38	15	M.A	Practicum Program Coordinator	Social Science

Source: The above information was obtained from the Human Resource Directorate office of Hossana College of Teachers' Education on July 10, 2021.

The data presented in Table 5:2 pertains to the individuals who were interviewed for this study, specifically teacher educators, deans, and practicum coordinators. According to the data, the participants possess a teaching experience of over a

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decade. The selection of college tutors was determined through consultation with the practicum coordinator utilizing the purposive sampling methodology.

5.2.2 The following section pertains to the profiles of student teachers at Hosanna College of Teachers Education.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to choose ten third-year student teachers, with two individuals selected from each of the streams. The selection criteria included active class participation, expressive communication skills, and academic performance, and were determined in consultation with the respective department heads.

Table 5.3: The following table presents bibliographic information pertaining to trainee teachers.

Student-teachers (Pseudonyms)	Gender	Age	Stream	Placement School to be Assigned for Practicum IV
Tariku Asfaw	M	22	Language	Bobicho Primary School
Gisachew Anebo	M	21	Social Science	Haile Bubamo Primary School
Solomon Bekele	M	21	Social Science	Alemu W/Hana
Molito Abayeneh	M	22	Aesthetics & Sport Sciences	Masbira Primary School
Endiryas Ersulo	M	22	Natural Science & Mathematics	Ersa Adada Primary School
Sebsibe Ketema	M	21	Language	Ambicho
Hamame Lopiso	F	21	Special needs	Alemu W/Hana Primary School
Handamo Erdelo	M	22	Natural Sciences & Mathematics	Bobicho Primary School
Erkebo Ayanto	M	21	Aesthetics & Sport Sciences	Masbira Primary School
Sulamo Taggese	M	22	Special needs	Ersa Adada Primary School

Source: The data was collected through a field study conducted in August 2021.

The table above displays the demographic information of student-teachers. The age range of the student teachers was limited to individuals aged 21 to 22 years. Each of the individuals was allocated to one of the six primary schools that are partners in the program.

5.2.3 This section examines the profiles of placement school principals and mentors.

The individual has identified six schools where they have been placed. Six principals and six mentors from placement schools were intentionally chosen based on the recommendations of school administrators. The study only included school mentors who possessed prior experience in mentoring.

Table 5.4: Presents bibliographic information pertaining to placement school principals and mentors.

Placement school Principals and Mentors (Pseudonyms)	Gender	Age	Work experience	Qualification	Position	Specialization
Dejene Ayele	M	43	21	B.A.	School Mentor	Sport Sciences
Hassen Muktar	M	40	18	B.A.	School Mentor	English
Meskerem Mohammed	F	35	13	B.A.	School Mentor	Mathematics
Zenebech Tsige	F	33	11	B.A.	School Mentor	Social Sciences
Tsige Ayele	F	38	14	B.A.	School Mentor	Chemistry
Ayalew Setore	M	35	13	B.A.	School Mentor	Environmental Sciences
Ermecho Hobe	M	45	23	M.A.	School Prncipal	School leadership
Jemal Nuredin	M	41	18	B.A.	School Prncipal	Educational Management
Aynalem Hailu	F	42	20	B.A.	School Prncipal	Educational Management
Kifle Meskelo	M	46	24	M.A.	School Prncipal	School leadership
Ersame Handamo	F	42	19	B.A.	School Prncipal	Educational Management
Hanane Abdlkerim	F	38	16	B.A.	School Prncipal	Educational Management

Source: The data presented in the above table was obtained through a field study conducted in July of 2021.

The table above displays the characteristics of placement school principals and mentors, including their varying levels of professional experience and areas of expertise.

5.3   RESEARCH PROCESS

I sought to understand the participants' perspectives, ideas and beliefs by spending an extended period in the field, which helped me, present the results honestly. However, the need for multiple data sources to validate the results and the desire to include rich narrative data posed substantial difficulties for the overall project management at all stages. As far as data collection is concerned, problems include ensuring anonymity and confidentiality.

However, I was faced with a series of obstacles to observing the post-teaching conferences. Many instructors preferred to exclude their feedback sessions from being watched because they feared the report would somehow affect them. Many efforts were made to persuade them to allow me to video-record the conferences. In the informal conversations with most instructors, I informed them that the sole purpose was to observe programme implementation and not to evaluate a particular teacher. I explicitly explained that I would not use the participants' names when reporting the findings. Despite this, they often felt uncomfortable. If I had not had a good relationship with the staff as a member, I would not have been able to get so much information from the teacher educators by listening in on their post-teaching conferences.

5.4   DATA ANALYSIS

Using the methods described in Chapter four, a great deal of qualitative data was collected from individual interviews, observations and document reviews, along with field notes. This section presents the findings emerging from the data, and beginning with data collected from individual interviews, in greater depth in the research process, so that readers can follow the discussions of the results.

5.4.1   Data emerging from the Interviews

The interview data were analysed and the findings are presented in the form of narratives and vignettes under broad themes. The list of themes was compiled according to the sub-research questions and the findings are discussed in relation to

the aims of the study. Each target's potential themes needing to be examined for its achievement were identified. Extensive reading of the literature further shaped the identified themes by validating current themes and identifying new ones for consideration. This list was the starting point for the analysis process, which remained productive. Each piece of data was evaluated with regard to pre-existing themes. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms are used in all of the cases. If, by chance, any of the names used in the case descriptions refer to someone else, it is just a coincidence. Quotes were used throughout the presentation of the results to show how the participants told their stories and to highlight important points. Coding was used in all the results to show where the quotes came from and create an audit trail. The following format is used for coding: (Pseudonym/types of data and date of data to be taken).

The presentation of the findings of the study begins with the first sub-research question under two related themes: key stakeholders' beliefs and experiences about the purposes of practicum and key stakeholders' practices of constructivist theory of learning in the pre-service practicum. As a reminder, the first sub-questions were: *How do college teacher educators, college deans, college practicum coordinators, associate teachers, school principals, and trainees perceive and experience the purposes and practices of pre-service practicum aligned to the intentions of constructivist theory of learning in the teacher education programme?*

5.4.1.1 Key stakeholders' beliefs and experiences about the purposes of practicum

One of the issues that emerged from the data was how the participants felt about the the purposes of the ongoing practicum program. The goal of teacher education is to best prepare teachers to achieve educational goals. However, as it has been criticised as ineffective in preparing teachers for their work and remote from practice, the practicum now focuses on a new way of training in which a college or university programme is linked to schools in the area (Fekede, 2009; MoE, 2011). To this end, the move to school-based training is explicitly justified in terms of an attack on theory. This means that theoretical knowledge acquired in higher education institutions is assumed to be verified and refined in the world of experience (the

schools) (Geletu & Mekonnen, 2019:41). With this in mind, this section is devoted to explore the beliefs and experiences both parties involved.

The collected data from individual interviews indicated that key players in the practicum programme, such as college deans, teacher educators, student teachers, placement school mentors and school principals, have more or less the same understanding of the purpose of the practicum. Respondents indicated that the purpose of the practicum is to help student teachers acquire direct school experience through their observation of the school and classroom environment, engagement in different school activities (such as preparing teaching aids, lesson plans, and so forth) and actual teaching. Respondents seem to believe that the practicum creates an opportunity for experiential learning in the actual school environment, equipping student teachers with the knowledge and experience of the school and children's academic, social, and emotional development. For example, the academic dean of Hossana College of Teacher Education, Abraham (a pseudonym), reiterated the above purposes when interviewed about the purpose of the practicum. According to him:

> *"The practicum is mainly intended for to help students practice knowledge from courses offered in teacher education programmes and give them the experience of face-to-face interaction with the students. They also get the chance to get to know the school's environment. They must reflect on actual practices and introduce school changes"* (AH, interviewed on September 15, 2021).

The practicum coordinator of the college, Teketel, also seems to have a similar conception of the practicum programme, expressing his strong beliefs about its importance. He said that:

> *"Practicum is essential. We will not be successful if our students cannot apply what they have learned at school. Thus, the practicum is a good place for this. The practicum is expected to compensate for the students' serious academic*

and linguistic deficiencies because they have severe intellectual and linguistic flaws" (TF interviewed on September 17, 2021).

The teacher educators in the community also shared the views of the academic dean. In the interview discussion, the practicum was used to apply theory to practice and develop student teachers' awareness of the demands of teaching (Korthagen, Loughran & Russel, 2006; Seferoğlu, 2006). One additional purpose mentioned by a few teacher educators is to make student teachers reflect on actual school practices.

Wondwosen stated:

"The practicum is needed to ensure our graduates have the designed profile/competencies or qualification as primary school teachers. It gives the trainees sufficient real-life school experience regarding theoretical knowledge obtained from the college. In other words, practicum is a bridge between theory and practice. Just knowing the theory won't help someone get a job in a certain field".

Interviewed teacher educators at the college level expressed similar sentiments. In their interviews, they talked about the following purposes of the practicum courses: to give students a chance to put into practice what they have learned in the classroom and improve their knowledge and skills in the process; to give students the chance to learn necessary teaching skills and other related skills; to get to know the environment of the school where they will be working; to give students the confidence to reflect on their school experience; to help students develop a professional ethics Therefore, the results were in agreement with the previous findings in this regard (Fekede, 2009:110).

Some student teachers, in the interviews conducted at the college, mentioned that the practicum has a beneficial experience. They stated that by taking part in the practicum, they gained knowledge and skills that will be extremely beneficial in their future teaching careers. They mentioned the specific benefits that they gained through the practicum. From the individual interviews with student teachers, the following points have been gathered as lessons learned from the practicum:

- Knowledge of community and school relationships;
- Knowledge of student behaviour and the school environment;
- Knowledge of school rules and regulations;
- Classroom management skills;
- Actual teaching abilities in lesson plan preparation (daily, weekly, and annual); and
- Skills in preparing teaching aids.

Interestingly, what resides in the minds of all student teacher participants in the interview discussions is that the practicum is meant to test theories and methods learned in college in actual classroom situations. For example, a student teacher, Sulamo, stated:

> *"The practicum is necessary to see how theories (in the course work) work in actual practice. This is a difficult task; we use the practicum by employing different strategies. The practicum also intends to teach students proper behaviour and how to get along with diverse people in a work situation. How can I work with teachers and students? So, the practicum is good"* (ST, interviewed August 30, 2021).

Another student teacher, Erkebo, also stated:

> *"The usefulness of the practicum is unquestionable. Unfortunately, I have not found the practicum as I expected it to be. I was placed in a private school. I think the problem was with the placement. I thought I would apply or test theories learned in college in the practicum. But my cooperating teacher (school mentor) could not accept new ideas and practices; even the difference in lesson planning was not accepted. Perhaps the issue stemmed from the placement"* (EA, interviewed August 27, 2021).

A cooperating teacher and head of the school's practicum coordinator, Zenebech, also expressed similar views when asked about the purposes of the practicum:

"The student teachers have to learn the practice of teaching here. They know the theoretical issues, but they have to experience what it means to work in a school" (ZT, interviewed July 19, 2021).

A college teacher-educator by the pseudonym Kibemo (interviewed September 10, 2021), described how the practicum is theoretically sound despite being entangled with several practical problems. Another teacher educator, Mencha (interviewed September 06, 2021), reported the practicum, with all its faults, is of paramount importance. Mencha further elaborated his idea:

"If we think of our experience, there was no opportunity for the trainees to realise how the context impacts learning."

In such a case, a trainee teacher equipped with theoretical knowledge could be seen facing many challenges in teaching learners about whom they did not know much. He also added,

"Nowadays, trainees are fully exposed to what is happening outside and inside the classroom through actual school experience. Accordingly, they develop unshakable confidence to confront the teaching challenges that await them" (MS, interviewed on September 6, 2021).

In light of this, the data gathered through multiple instruments confirmed that trainees are encouraged to learn, practice and improve their competency as teachers during the practicum. Handamo (a student-teacher) also responded in the same way:

"The practicum helped me to conceptualise the teaching-learning process in the existing classroom situation. That is, it helped me identify the problems in advance and initiated an inquiry mind to solve them. So, when I teach, I try not only to learn about the subject matter but also to make it clear to the students" (HE, interviewed on August 25, 2021).

Endrias, a student-teacher explained:

"The practicum is the key instrument through which one gets authentic evidence about the schools, about learners, teaching, learning, parents and the community at large" (EE, interviewed on August 18, 2021).

Another student-teacher, Erkebo (interviewed on August 27, 2021), perceived the practicum as a 'lens' that magnifies what teaching and learning are all about. He said that the practicum helps the trainees get used to the school environment and then to the things that happen in the classroom and the problems that can get in the way of a smooth school day.

The goal of the practicum is to provide trainees with a foundational understanding of the existing school environment as well as ensuring that trainees can put their learning skills into practice. It seems that the practicum has a dual purpose: providing an opportunity to link theory with practice and creating awareness about how schools function.

For Sebsibe, a student-teacher, a practicum is considered a *"get way to effective teaching".* He described his perspective as follows:

"Practicum taught me how teachers treat and educate their students. I also recognised that using appropriate teaching aids makes teaching simpler and facilitates learning for understanding. In addition, I appreciated the teacher's expertise in handling classroom disciplinary problems and their impact on students' learning" (SK, discussed on August 20, 2021).

Sebsibe's explanation reminds us of an aspect of Bandura's social learning theory (Bandura, 1977). Asgedom (2000:73-88) elaborated on this by saying that students imitate more of what they see than what they hear and read. They imitate the actions of their instructors and exercise selectively according to what their instructors tell them to do.

Zenebech, a school mentor, also explained her feelings by saying,

> *"School is a miniature of society. Thus, the school experience allows students to gain new perspectives on societal aspirations and expectations and the context in which the school operates to meet these demands …the practicum is an alternative way to produce competent professionals"* (ZT, interviewed on July 19, 2021).

Like many other research participants, she believes that the trainees' better performance (success) in teaching methodology was attributed to school experience. Zenebech also said that she thought the trainees would start their jobs as experienced professionals, not as inexperienced newcomers.

Kibemo's explanation as a teacher educator, was indicative of his understanding of the current conception of practicum. He confidently expressed,

> *"It is a prerequisite to get practical experience as a nurse before engaging oneself in the actual work. The same holds for a person who is becoming a teacher"* (KA, reported on September 10, 2021).

Kibemo added one more example to clarify his analogy: *"an untrained or unskilled nurse may hurt a patient, but an untrained or unskilled teacher may rather kill a generation".* In line with this, the idea of the practicum owes much to the reflective practitioner. This means that theory and practice are not separate.

Even though both student teachers and teacher educators agree that teaching practice and school experience are important parts of pre-service preparation, most people also agree that it is hard because of its length, limited time and the type and amount of supervision (Moore, 2003).

In addition, student-teacher, Hamame, critically explained her views by saying:

> *"Although we are now and then told to make ourselves responsible for learning, many students are not ready to play their expected role. Instead,*

they frequently try to use various strategies to get through the system without developing the necessary competence" (HL, August 23, 2021).

Hamame's comment implies that students are not fully engaged in and are not fully responsible in developing proficiency and competence in the skill of teaching.

In support of trainee-teachers, teacher-educators expressed their reservations about the mis-match between the content of the practicum and the actual school practice. For example, one teacher educator, Ewenetu, said: *"However, for students, it is an event for entertaining because it carries more weight than the academic courses, but they do not pay proportional attention to it."*

Another teacher educator, identified by the pseudonym Mencha in the interview, also attributed the observed problems in the practicum to the mentors' lack of knowledge about the purpose and specific contents of the practicum courses. He commented:

> *"Every practicum session has objectives listed as expected outcomes but is not adequately explained. Nor are these known by the school mentors. Only we know what each practicum session will be about"* (MS, interviewed September 6, 2021).

Yet another teacher educator, Erdolo, said the following in a bid to explain why the practicum has not met its purposes*:*

> *"Because it does not have its own budget, mentors are laissez-faire. This, in turn, makes student-teachers less concerned"* (ED interviewed September 08, 2021).

Given this, a teacher educator in the college, Wondwosen stated:

> *"In principle, we request the students to work with the cooperating teachers on developing teaching skills, learning administrative issues, the school environment, and reflecting on school practices. In contrast, they practice in placement schools. But in preparation, neither of these things is done correctly as there is no follow-up"* (WE, interviewed on September 01, 2021).

In addition, Wondwosen stated the following about the necessity of practicum:

"Apart from its inherent limitations associated with implementation, the necessity of practicum is unquestionable" said Wondwosen, a teacher educator (interviewed on September 01, 2021).

For him, first-year trainees show a favourable attitude towards the practicum. However, their interest gradually declines as they pass into the second year because the learning tasks scheduled for each year are not that different. The trainees confirmed this and said that the practicum was full of repeated ideas and questions that were so similar that they could make both parties feel bored.

5.4.1.2 *Key stakeholders' practices of constructivist theory of learning in the pre-service practicum*

The data collected through multiple instruments from various sources confirmed that participants' practices about the basic assumptions and theoretical basis underlying constructivist theory of learning were more or less unsatisfactory. The following points drawn from the data ensure the lower level of participants' awareness of the basic assumptions and theoretical basis underlying constructivist pedagogy. These are:

- Personal explanations of basic assumptions;
- Practicum courses require minimisation of the practicum courses and relegation of practicum courses towards the end of the programme;
- Considering group work to be a waste of time, and
- Viewing the change as a vague political decision.

In the individual interviews with teacher educators, cooperating teachers, student-tehers and the college practicum coordinator, an attempt was made to explore the participants' awareness of the basic assumptions and theoretical bases underlying constructivist pedagogy. From the discussions, it was possible to see their awareness level. For example, when asked, how well do teacher educators understand what the programme is all about? Do you, as teacher-educator, know the

philosophical underpinnings of the programme? One of the teacher educators, Mencha, in the individual interview said the following:

"Well, I am not acquainted with the philosophy of TESO. Still, I feel that they have introduced this programme to relate theoretical issues or points given in the colleges with the practice that could be found within the primary schools. This goal should bring together theory and practice in elementary schools" (MS, interviewed September 6, 2021).

In the same vein, one of the cooperating teachers, named Zenebech, responded as follows:

"I don't think so. Maybe we can mention some of the objectives because we did this practice in college. So, I guess the aim is to enable students to practice. I mean, experience in teaching. And after that, we don't know, as far as I am concerned, we don't know any theoretical assumptions or conceptions regarding this programme. That's all" (ZT, interviewed on July 19, 2021).

From this quote, we can see that these stakeholders are living with the philosophy underpinning the earlier teacher education programme they were familiar with; as indicated in the excerpt, *"we did this kind of practice while in college"*. From a constructivist point of view, it is impossible to think that these people know how practice helps learning.

In support of the abve idea, Erdolo (a teacher educator), also responded as follows;

"One of the shortcomings in the current model of instruction is the unfamiliarity of the teachers with constructivist teacher education frameworks. Some kind of exposure was created for the new model through workshops. However, the old way of thinking persists to the extent that it could interfere with the rudimentary attempts made by the teachers to exercise active learning. The problem is more intense in teachers who have had a long teaching experience" (ED, Interview on September 8, 2021).

He also said that some teachers think that learner-centred teaching means using group work in their classes no matter what the topic is or what else is going on. According to Erdolo's explanation, teachers faced inadequate awareness of the new model of constructivist teacher education frameworks and their beliefs and established value systems as a potential source of challenge. As a result, the new practicum takes place against the backdrop of an already-existing system. Furthermore, teachers' ideas and values, which serve as a framework for their professional conduct and guide their actions, are firmly held and cannot be changed. That means that the idea systems powerfully influence instructors' beliefs about themselves, their pupils and what it means to teach (Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009; Mapolisa & Tshabalala, 2014).

This fundamentally new concept of the practicum, a constructivist teacher education framework, demands new role expectations for teacher educators, school mentors and student-teachers. To this end, the constructivist teacher education framework advocates learning as the activity of the learners. Therefore, creating opportunities for the learners to involve themselves in the learning tasks of constructivist teacher education frameworks is mandatory (Kapur, 2018; Kelly, 2012).

However, the data gathered from multiple sources in the field work revealed that due to several problems (such as large class size, textbook shortage, inadequate training, and so forth), constructivist teacher education frameworks were seldom practised by placement schools and, as a result, a learner-centred approach, which encourages a deep way of learning, is has less emphasis. These findings are in harmony with the previous findings from literature in this regard (Khillar, 2020). Therefore, one cannot undermine the influence of constructivist teacher education frameworks on student teachers' practice. The context in which student teachers find themselves is critical and affects how they approach their school experience, how they make sense of what it means to be an effective teacher and what they learn from the experience.

Student teachers further noted that the contexts of placement schools to constructivist teacher education frameworks are often less supportive when student

teachers feel uncomfortable in their school mentors' support and feel unwelcome coming to school. Consolidating this, Gisachew (a student-teacher) explained his encounter as follows:

"During the teaching practice at placement school, I came to recognise men of two worlds'—one group, the trainees who are exercising the new model of teaching (constructivist teacher education frameworks), and the other group, with the relics of the traditional model. It is not difficult to speculate why teachers who adhere to the conventional model neglect to exercise active learning strategies in the existing classroom. It seems that such teachers lack not only critical awareness but also motivation. So, I fear our attempts will be engulfed" (GA, Interview on August 11, 2021).

Gisachew's comments revealed the extent to which the delivery of curriculum reform was facilitated or impeded by the workplace culture and the teachers' established value system. Research found that trainee teachers had more idealistic and selfless ideas about education than their qualified teachers. This backs up Gisachew's fear.

As stipulated in the teacher education system overhaul (TESO) document, the constructivist teacher education framework, skills and knowledge required in the practicum are demonstrated in all subject and professional courses. This is presumably because the curriculum provides opportunities for students to explore, reflect, interact and communicate with other students and adults (MOE, 2011). To this point, Ewenetu, a teacher-educator, has the following to say:

"The courses offered at our college are organised mainly by the college instructors based on already provided course outlines. We haven't yet developed the expertise to manage systems to facilitate active learning. We are getting some awareness through an ongoing higher diploma programme (HDP). Now we have realised that we do not need to wait for anybody else to come and do it. It is our responsibility to bring the necessary change and improvement as much as possible" (ET, Interviewed on September 03, 2021).

Ewenetu's explanation indicated his suspicion that subject matter qualification alone does not guarantee someone to organise the course in the way the new constructivist teacher education framework (model) demands. In this regard, it is whether the subject and professional courses adequately prepare the trainees to succeed in practicum and vice versa.

In his interview, the college's practicum coordinator, Teketel, said the following in response to a question about the philosophy behind the programme:

> *"OK, but what I'm going to tell you is from my reading. I think the theoretical foundation of the programme is a constructivist theory. The learner can construct knowledge by himself; the theoretical basis of the programme is constructivist theory. Research has proved this. To produce well-educated, competent teachers, educators must present theory and practice side by side. Student teachers learn about learning theories in college and observe and experiment with them during practicum settings. Eventually, they will develop their theories"* (TF, interviewed on September 17, 2021).

Though his response was consistent with the theories of constructivism (Selwyn, 2016), his introductory sentence, "*OK, but what I'm going to tell you are from my reading"* indicates that others in the programme may not be in a position to have the same level of awareness. This inference has been made because of the other remarks the same person made in the interview. Here are some of the comments;

> *"I firmly believe that a competency-based approach is the foundation for our practices. This is the dominant assumption among college supervisors and schoolteachers. This must be changed. Unless it is changed, no one listens to you, even when you try to explain things from a new perspective. These underlying assumptions entice them"* (TF, interviewed on September 17, 2021).

In another instance, this same person made this remark about the threat of the ongoing programme *"Perhaps a lack of awareness. I have seen all these issues these days as I read the literature because of my assignment to this position".*

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Moreover, from the responses of teacher educators, we can see a lot of things that could show their low levels of awareness about the principles and theories underlying constructivist pedagogy. One instance could be that, in the instructors' interviews, some participants raised the issue of weight given to the practical component of the programme. They also suggested that the importance given to the content area should be raised and that of the practicum should be lowered. For example, one of the participants in the instructor's class named Wondwosen stated:

> *"So, I think the credits given to practicum courses are exaggerated too much. Minimising the credits is also essential, giving us room to have more content area courses. The most crucial content area courses were not included. They were excluded. When you look at the old curriculum, we had so many courses that were very important to improving proficiency. For example, when we come to language teaching, language teaching is not only the teaching aspect. It has also gone to the other extreme. More practicum courses had a big effect on the content area courses"* (WE, interviewed on September 1, 2021).

Another essential point depicting a low level of belief in constructivist pedagogy is that most instructors seemed to worry a lot about the coverage of content in the syllabus. This seems to stem from the belief that teaching is more telling or transmitting than doing, which is deep-rooted in the traditional and cultural attitude towards education or teaching. The following extracts from the teacher educator named Kibemo illustrate these points:

> *"I can't cover the syllabus if I have to do my work as suggested in the course modules. So, I often tell my students to do group discussions with their friends outside of class because the most important thing is to give the lessons' highlights to cover the course's designed content. It is a waste of time for me to try to get students to work in pairs and groups"* (KA interviewed on September 10, 2021).

The first two statements show that the teacher's role is to transmit the designed content of the course material, and the learners' role is to receive knowledge from a teacher and work hard to retain that knowledge. The last statement also shows that using group and pair work activities in a classroom wastes time as little can be learned compared to the teacher telling students all the required information. So, from this, it can be inferred that the instructors had a different epistemological belief that their most important duty is their teaching rather than the students' learning and that it is up to the students to master what the teachers covered in their lectures by putting in the extra effort. There seems to be another idea behind the above quote, which is that when the old courses were redesigned for the new programme, they did not change much other than the number of credit hours they were worth.

All the arguments support the absence of conceptual deliberation among teacher educators. Even though all departments have good expertise in subject methodology, all the practicum courses are tuned to principles of general methods, as the reviewed documents revealed. For example, the evaluation checklist, portfolio formats and school reports on the performance of student teachers all showed that the pedagogical content knowledge domain was not taken into account.

The portfolios reviewed for this study also confirm the lack of conceptual grasp, that is, the student teachers were expected only to respond to the stimuli given in the format. This means that the student teachers were hardly expected to articulate their professional thinking to describe what they did and how and why they did it. Moreover, the inherently social nature of learning in professional practice was not addressed. They were not told to keep learning journals in their portfolios or do action research.

The evaluation checklist focuses mostly on general teaching skills and only addresses one point about specific subject matter knowledge: the ability to transmit knowledge, which is the main focus of the transmission model.

The TESO document reviewed for this study also confirms that to be effective, student teachers need to have the chance to explore teaching methods and

practices in light of the constructivist teacher education frameworks. In addition, the practicum guidelines for the primary school document review revealed that the conceptualisation of the practicum and its purposes are clearly stated under the constructivist teacher education frameworks (MOE, 2011). The document further indicates that the application of knowledge, skills and affective qualities gained from teacher education programmes would be developed by working with primary school teachers (MOE, 2011). But teacher educators and the academic dean of the college have added 'reflective practice' as one of the purposes of the practicum, even though the way the practicum is actually done does not match up with the assumptions of the constructivist theory of learning.

5.4.1.3   *The support and guidance provided to the trainees*

The third theme in the research was the support and guidance provided to the trainees. The discussion of the findings of this theme is an answer to the second sub-research question: *How do Hosana College of Teacher Education and its partner schools support and guide the pre-service trainees during the pre-service practicum programme?*

In order for the trainees to get the most out of the practicum programme, they need support and guidance, which requires careful planning that, focuses on three things: the people, the programme, and the organisation (Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005). In line with this, Wondwosen, a college tutor and guidance and counselling officer at the college, said:

> *"Practicum, by its nature, needs highly coordinated work. But things, as I see them, are done haphazardly. The college assigns the student teachers mainly to gain school experience and practice teaching. School principals see student teachers as problem-solvers who are there to lighten the load of regular teachers. Because of this, they give them time each week to teach without letting them watch or learn from their placement teachers"* (WE, interviewed on September 1, 2021).

The data obtained from individual interviews and discussions revealed that the college first held the workshop for placement school directors to raise awareness about practicum implementation. However, it was not fruitful in helping to achieve what was intended. Concerning the support and guidance of school mentors, student-teacher Molito explains this:

"A school teacher from whom I obtained the needed information appeared reluctant and refused to put his signature that assures the validity of the collected data. In the meantime, though, my college tutor talked to him and he agreed" (MA, Interviewed on August 16, 2021).

Another student teacher, Hamame also noted:

"During my school visit, I encountered teachers who are conscious of their work and responsive to those who seek help. At another time, I faced teachers who seemed careless but lacked proper orientation to give the needed support and show direction" (HL, Interview on June 22, 2021).

Student teachers have also felt the problem regarding mentors. A student teacher, Sulamo, stated:

"Cooperating teachers are trained in the old model. The planning is traditional. They have weekly plans, not daily lesson plans. We are told in college to prepare daily lesson plans. They are not interested in doing that. They plan to satisfy the demands of the supervisors and other heads. I sought approval from the cooperating teacher for my plans. He disapproved of it. He told me that it was wrong and that it would not work. He informed me. So, there was a conflict between him and me. When I incorporated some active learning methods, he told me they were impractical because the class size was too large. That is true, but you can test them in a classroom. But I wanted to use them to some extent, but that did not work out" (ST, Interview on August 30, 2021).

Some student teachers even appear to have had painful experiences. For example, a student teacher, Tariku, stated:

> *"To save money, we were placed in nearby schools. Because the college uses the same schools as partners every other year, the cooperating teachers appear tired and bored. We (student teachers and cooperating teachers) didn't properly carry out expected roles and responsibilities. Students feel burned, and cooperating teachers also feel burned. Hence, I don't think there is a good relationship between us"* (TA, interviewed on August 09, 2021).

Only a few student teachers have expressed satisfaction with what they gained from school mentors. In some cases, the student teachers and mentors worked smoothly together. The interaction even developed to the level of peer coaching. A student-teacher, Endriyas, stated that:

> *"I have got a good cooperating teacher. I had a very positive relationship. His feedback was very constructive. He also introduced peer observation. The mentor got five student teachers. He invited the student teachers to observe their peers' teaching and reflect on it. He will bring us together and invite my peers to comment on my practice. Then, he will reflect on what went 'good and bad'* (EE, interviewed on August 18, 2021).

Another student teacher, Gisachew, reported:

> *"It [practicum] helped us test our practice theory. Teaching requires practice, even though we have the idea. My relationship with the cooperating teacher was very motherly. She supported me very well. We worked very well with our mentor. We assisted low-achievers on Saturday and Sunday. The school's administration was outstanding. She gathered three of the student teachers once a day, then we discussed what we would do, and then the next day, she told us our strengths and weaknesses"* (GA, Interview on August 11, 2021).

The above two responses indicate the emotional support and provision of feedback the student teachers got from the cooperating teachers. Hence, it is imperative to

note that student-teacher and mentor interaction depends very much on the support they get from the cooperating teachers. These contentions were in support of the previous findings from literature in this regard (Eraslan, 2009).

However, a widely held belief among student teachers is that cooperating teachers' feelings of exhaustion lessen their willingness to support learners in their classrooms. In fact, there have been instances where the dialogue that evolved between collaborating teachers and student teachers caused the latter to worry about their future careers in education. A student teacher named Endriyas commented that his cooperating teacher was really impressive.

> *"All the teachers appear to have no interest in teaching; they feel tired and bored." But they still tried to assist us. Some tell us that teaching in primary schools is very tiresome and unrewarding. You believe your life would be as dull as that of school teachers"* (EE, Interviewed on August 18, 2021).

College deans, teacher educators, and practicum coordinators have similar observations. A teacher educator, Erdolo, said most school mentors seem to think that the college sends students to give them relief from their duties. A college vice academic dean, Abraham, also stated that:

> *"Student teachers are expected to learn from the cooperating teachers' lesson planning, classroom management, and assessment skills. Although this is the purpose of the practicum, the cooperating teachers usually do not do that. They have closer interaction with the student teachers. However, they use the student teachers to ease their burdens. They do not help them to develop teaching skills. This may be because the cooperating teachers are not trained in mentoring. They consider the practicum a break from their job, as they leave everything to the student teachers until the end of the practicum"* (AH, interviewed on September 15, 2021).

The data collected from school mentors through individual interviews revealed that there had been no meaningful collaboration among the placement schools and the college for the last two years. Even mentors and tutors were perplexed about the

steps in implementing the practicum. In connection with this, Hassen, a school mentor, described the situation as follows:

> *"Many trainees frequently come to us seeking help or at least some kind of guidance. Last year, for example, over sixty trainees came for a classroom observation at a time. They were distributed among the available classes that were already overcrowded and lacked extra chairs to sit on. Accordingly, the trainees were forced to sit or stand in any place possible and try to observe what teaching and learning appeared to be. Under such circumstances, it would be naive to consider that the trainees could fulfil their wishes"* (HM, interviewed on July 14, 2021).

There were also indicators of events from field work that required concerted efforts of both involved parties to narrow the existing communication break. For instance, Kibemo (a teacher-educator) stressed that programme inconveniences were among the teachers' most prevalent problems. This was evident when the trainees' fieldwork overlapped with cooperating schools' tests or any programme alternation. I witnessed such a programme clash at three placement schools. Because of this, both the trainees and I were unable to watch how the classroom worked.

In addition, teacher educators' role in supporting and guiding student teachers is also limited. The teacher educators themselves admitted that they attributed it to different causes. A teacher educator named Kibemo stated:

> *"I think our role is more supervisory. We meet the student teachers twice and rarely meet the mentors as we go to school for a week. And we have to observe many students. We cannot be involved in the reflection of student teaching practices. So, the responsibility is very much on the mentors"* (KA, interviewed on September 10, 2021).

Another teacher educator, Mecha, also commented:

> *"Our role is limited to correcting students' reflection assignments and grading their results." We are occupied with teaching duties, so we have limited time*

to go to school. Even our supervision is artificial as we have to observe many students" (MS, interviewed on September 06, 2021).

Another teacher educator, Ewenetu, commented;

"We have a lot to do in terms of supporting them. But we cannot say we have successfully discharged our responsibilities because we are over-burdened with teaching and supervising their work. We cannot visit them as frequently as required" (ET, interviewed on September 03, 2021).

School mentors also noted the limited role that college supervisors played and questioned whether they assisted the student teachers as they had only once or twice observed them. School mentors reported that the practicum is not implemented as intended and, as a result, student teachers are not accomplishing their tasks properly. This is because the mentors say college supervisors do not seriously follow up with the trainees. Some mentors indicated that some college supervisors might not appear even once a week. When they occasionally come to school, they spend a few minutes (10–20) on each student teacher's classroom supervision and give inadequate feedback.

Student teachers share the views of mentors regarding the lack of continued follow-up by college supervisors. They reported that the assistance and feedback their college supervisors gave them were unsatisfactory (Kuter & Koç, 2009; Paker, 2005). Their relationship with the supervisors appears to be far from collegial and smooth. For example, a student teacher, Sebsibe, reported:

"My relationship with the college supervisor was not good. He did not tell me anything. He came just to evaluate me. But he did not give me any sort of feedback. We fear them. There is no openness. We don't have good relationships with teacher educators, although there are some" (SK, interviewed on August 20, 2021).

Another student teacher, Hamame, also commented:

"In general, I don't think that the instructors are ready to assist us. Most of them have second degrees. We cannot be as good as them. Or maybe we are also poor in many ways. Their expectations are very high. Rather than supporting us to reach the level they expected us to be, they demonstrated to us their sadness at our ability. What is up with this generation? They can't go back in time and relive their school day. Even if we are poor, it is not their role to tell me how imperfect I am. They have to assist me in improving myself" (HL, interviewed on August 23, 2021).

Another student teacher, Solomon also reiterated that weaknesses are emphasised, and two days of observations with no proper feedback do not help him to improve his skills. He stated;

"We were placed in the nearby schools to get proper and close supervision from the college instructors. But there was no practical work. He observed me twice, and I met him for 10 minutes. He told me about my weaknesses. That was all. Because of the poor relationship between the college and the schools, he did not even know the period I was teaching. So, I had to call and inform him when he came. I think it is simple supervision" (SB, interviewed on August 13, 2021).

Mencha (a teacher-educator) also claimed he could not help the trainees as he should because of an inadequate understanding of what to do in subsequent phases of each practicum. As described by Mencha, the guidelines were sometimes handed out just on the way to placement schools, so the instructor faced difficulty guiding his trainees. On the other hand, Teketel, the practicum coordinator of the college, explained his viewpoints as follows:

"Despite the enormous responsibilities the practicum unit has been given, there are not enough personnel to make our efforts successful. Nevertheless, attempts have been made to enhance the involvement of both parties involved. For example, more of the budget has been used to hold workshops,

group schools that work together into clusters, and give them things like computers, copiers, printers, and office supplies" (TF, Interviewed September 17, 2021).

Teketel, however, did not deny the problems associated with practicum. He pointed out that the participation of college teachers in the workshop was inadequate because teachers were busy with extension and weekend classes at which workshops were conducted. According to Riesky (2013), to implement a new instructional approach, teachers need short-term training, a forum, workshops, and so forth. When this happens, teachers need to be able to argue, talk, research and figure out how to explain their beliefs.

Teketel also explained:

> *"Although many college teachers cooperate with their colleagues in their work, there are still teachers who view collaboration as a ladder-subordinate relationship"* (TF, interviewed on September 17, 2021).

To him, such teachers seemed bored with practicum and considered it an extra-official assignment. For some teachers, opportunities for collaborative discussion are unwanted and rejected. It can be argued that people are the key to any implementation effort, but they are not always ready to accept change.

According to Ewenetu, a teacher-educator, although workshops were conducted and materials were issued for placement schools, a significant collaboration was not yet established between placement schools and teacher education colleges to support and guide the trainees. His reasoning was based on the fact that almost all of the responsibilities fell on the college alone.

The practicum was not accepted as part of the daily tasks for some teacher educators. During fieldwork, I encountered college instructors who viewed practicum as nothing more than taking trainees to the placement schools and back to college. In line with this, the college teacher educator, Mencha, described his views as follows:

"Support comes when there is a need for support in the course of teaching or providing orientation as usual, but is inadequate, in my opinion. because I explain to trainees what they should observe or do at school and how they should reflect on it when they return to college. Practicum, on the other hand, has higher expectations. In my opinion, the tutor should stay at school and see or observe what is happening to guide and provide immediate feedback so that the reflection and portfolio could have been more meaningful" (MS, interviewed on September 06, 2021).

Some teachers were overburdened by routine and/or additional office assignments and could not provide the necessary support to the trainees. Still, not many school mentors do more than help trainees when they ask for it. They rarely check to see how well trainees are engaged in learning tasks. In this respect, Wondwosen (a teacher-educator) described his role in the way stated below:

"The extent to which mentors and tutors are aware of the programme and strive for its success, the nature of support provided to trainees, and their level of engagement may differ. At the same time, learners must have a positive attitude and be ready for the planned instruction" (WE, Interview on September 01, 2021).

Nevertheless, the trainees' involvement in the practicum seems to be instrumental. For instance, Gisachew, a student-teacher, explained it as:

"I don't give less attention to Practicum. But instead, my ambition is to earn a good grade since the failure to do well in this course does not guarantee my graduation" (GA, Interviewed on August 11, 2021).

But as Wondwosen explained above, exemplified by the practicum, links between teacher education institutions (TEIs) and schools are weak enough that they are unable to provide or gain school experience. It may be due to this fragile relationship and lack of mutual understanding that the student teachers are directly involved in the practicum activities without having support from placement teachers or schools.

In addition to teaching, the student teachers took up to 18 credit hours of coursework. The cumulative effect of these burdens made the student teachers highly over-burdened, which led some student teachers to resenting the profession to the extent of hating it. Wondwosen added:

> *"Before reforming one thing or trying to implement it, the necessary awareness should be created among those concerned about the programme. Otherwise, the issue is becoming the cart before the horse. The college and the school should mutually understand and work jointly for this common goal, unless it should be a big crime and a great punishment for the student teachers to send them to the schools under such conditions"* (WE, Interviewed on September 01, 2021).

His claims indicate that reformers should focus first on creating the necessary awareness and developing teachers' and administrators' knowledge and skills before implementing one programme and concentrating on changing the structure.

Following on from the above presentation of findings, the next two themes relate to the partnership exhibited between teacher education institutes and the placement schools and the status of the enabling environment as an answer to the third sub-research question in the study as indicated below: *How well does the learning context (environment) at Hossana College of Teacher Education's pre-service practicum programme encourage teacher trainees to be actively involved in the learning tasks that are aligned with a constructivist framework for teacher education?*

5.4.1.4   *The partnership between teacher education institutes and partner schools*

The findings from individual interview data collected from all research participants reveal that the partnership between the college and the schools is fragile. Concerning how teacher education institutes and partner schools work together, both college deans and school directors said that there is no formal written agreement between the college and the schools.

The academic dean of the college, Abraham, indicated that partner schools could vary year after year depending on the criteria used to place students. So, 'partnership' is developed through letters written by the college leaders to the schools. When asked about placement, he said:

> *"There is a common understanding that would be endorsed by the college and partner schools. Once a school is selected for placement, we will communicate with them through letters to assign mentors and assist the student teachers. When a school is chosen for the first time, we will orient the school leaders and some selected teachers about the roles and responsibilities. The orientation stresses points that need to get the focus of the mentors and school leaders"* (AH, interviewed on September 15, 2021).

The collected interview data also revealed that partnerships between the college and the schools could be characterised as a little more than one-dimensional. Schools are used as placement sites for student teachers to practise teaching routines and work with the classroom teacher. Even though each stakeholder points a finger at the other, all of the people who participated in the study said that there are not enough strong, cooperative working relationships in place.

Almost all the school principals reported that there is no mutual planning and evaluation of the practicum process by the partners. School directors in all schools said that in some cases, the programme of the college practicum conflicts with their school schedule. Student teachers are sometimes sent to their schools during exam periods, and in such cases, the student teachers do not have the chance to observe classrooms and get the support of mentors. The school directors take this as a severe limitation of the partnership. The directors say that this is because the practicum programme is not planned and evaluated together.

To show the one-sidedness of the partnership, one of the school directors, Ermecho, said the following to display the one-sidedness of the block:

> *"We had nothing to benefit from the cooperation with the college. We cover all the expenses, including the chalk and the lesson plan forms. But the college*

should have supported us in different ways. We needed their help, but we got none" (EH, interviewed on July 26, 2021).

Some school directors claim they benefit from the practicum programme and complain that practicing student teachers request school resources like stationary materials to prepare teaching aids. It is sometimes beyond the capacity of what the schools can afford. They also complained that though they get material support and training for their staff in the practicum programme, it disturbs their school schedule.

Similarly, the school director, Jemal, in one of the partner primary schools, also indicated that the partnership between the college and the school is very loose and nominal. He reported that:

"Except for the one-day training for directors, supervisors, and school practicum coordinators, we don't have any interaction with the college. The college sends the students to the schools, and we assign them different classroom teachers. Even the college supervisors who come to the school for supervision do not meet with us to discuss the student teachers' progress. They come and observe the students and leave the school without any interaction. Many school mentors do not know what is expected of them either. No manual or guidelines shows classroom teachers' responsibilities. They support them in planning and doing teaching activities. They are also involved in evaluating students" (JN, interviewed on July 28, 2021).

In the same vein, teacher educator, Ewenetu, indicated the following about the partnership between the college and the school:

"For me, the partnership between the college and the placement schools in performing the activities of the practicum programme seems to be very loosely held. The college tends to take the lion's share, and the schools no longer play a role beyond a receptive one. Schools should be recognised for their contributions to the practicum, which go beyond raising awareness" (ET, interviewed September 3, 2021).

Cooperating teachers (school mentors) reiterated the points reflected by the school principals. A school mentor, Ayalew, who has been in the school for more than 20 years stated:

> *"During my stay at the school, I only attended an orientation about our [cooperating teachers] role for a single day. There is no support coming from the college. There is no feeling of togetherness. There are no guidelines for how we should work with our student teachers. Sometimes we get five student teachers, and at other times we may get two or three. We are involved in assessing students, which is also very minimal. The college supervisors may or may not share ideas about the student teachers. There were times that I never met the college supervisor in the school"* (AS, interviewed on July 23, 2021).

Another point that the interview collected data shows the weak partnership between the teacher education institutes and the placement schools is the diminished roles of cooperating teachers (school mentors). Though school mentors and directors believe in the practicum's relevance for generating effective teachers, many are unhappy about the programme's implementation. Cooperating teachers and school directors said they did not understand what the practicum was for or how it was supposed to be used.

The college's academic dean also identified *"lack of serious involvement by many cooperating teachers"* as one of the problems between the college and schools' partnership. Cooperating teachers, on the other hand, highlighted that one of the significant roles the college was expected to play did not happen due to a very *"wobbly and non-collaborative relationship".* For example, a cooperating teacher, Tsige, stated:

> *"We don't plan together. The college sends students to the schools, and we train them. There is no training that we get from the college. We don't even know what is expected of us. There are times when the college supervisors meet neither the cooperating teacher nor the student teachers, as there is no*

shared planning. I think there is no interaction, and if there is some, it is a matter of luck. Our role isn't clear, and the way we help the students is random" (TA, interviewed on July 21, 2021).

Here is another example from a cooperating teacher, Zenebech to show how their roles have changed:

"We know nothing about what is going on. When the director tells us to accept some student-teachers, we just do as we are told. We do not have any contact with the college supervisors. Sometimes, we may not even see the supervisor, let alone sit together and discuss things" (ZT, interviewed on July 19, 2021).

The diminished roles of cooperating teachers have resulted in an alleged reluctance on behalf of the cooperating teachers. The practicum coordinator of the college Teketel, indicated that schools are very reluctant to consider the education of student teachers as their job. In explaining how the partnership was developed, he stated:

"Through the directive of the regional education bureau, schools know that they are responsible for training student teachers. We identify the schools in the college and then communicate with them through a letter. Because of the large number of student teachers, almost all schools in the city will be used for placement. We then communicate with the schools where the student teachers are placed, and then we send the students to each school" (TF interviewed on September 17, 2021).

In addition, the practicum coordinator presented the main criteria the college uses to select partner schools. These are the accessibility of the schools to the college, the better service provisions of the towns where the partner schools are located and food and transportation for the student teachers. Because of transportation costs, the college prioritised the nearby primary schools as partners, except for the fourth practicum. For Practicum IV, student teachers are assigned to schools in the districts where the students come from. One unique feature of the region is its ethnic,

linguistic and cultural diversity. Student teachers' training for the cluster programme is supposed to use the local language in teaching.

As a result, student teachers should be assigned to schools where they know the language of instruction. This makes the assignments so scattered that the colleges face several problems. Some of these are transportation problems for college supervisors and student teachers, the absence of accommodation facilities, for example. On the other hand, this is a perfect opportunity for student teachers to experience teaching in the schools where they will work in the future.

The college's practicum coordinator, Teketel, said that cooperating teachers do not want to think of mentoring student teachers as one of their jobs.

> *"Some teachers warmly welcome and support the students. Many, however, consider mentoring the students as an additional task without professional merit. The regional guidelines show that schools are responsible for the training of teachers. Cooperating Teachers or schools do not also refuse the placement of student teachers or mentor them. But, from their practice and support, many are not motivated to help the student teachers"* (TF interviewed September 17, 2021).

Though school mentors and directors believe the practicum's relevance for generating effective teachers is clear, many are unhappy about the programme's implementation. Teketel, the practicum coordinator of the college, also said that mentors, in particular, take their task of mentoring as an obligation rather than a responsibility. As a result, they are less interested in owning the programme. They reported that their workload is sometimes over thirty teaching periods per week and that mentoring is overburdened for them. They did not get any incentive for doing it.

In addition, the data obtained through unobtrusive observation revealed that though the triadic interaction among student teachers, mentors and college supervisors is valued by the respondents (student teachers, mentors, and college supervisors) for its better support and feedback provision, at present, this triadic interaction is reported to be very weak. Student teachers have direct interaction with both school

mentors and their college supervisors. However, school mentors have almost no interaction with college supervisors. The academic vice dean said that this is one of the college's worries and that plans are in place to remedy things in the future.

As stated earlier, one of the reasons for the weak interaction between college supervisors and school mentors is reported to be an additional workload. Besides their mentoring duties, school teachers reported that they are supposed to teach many credit hours per week. They said the practicum is an extra load on their busy days. College supervisors similarly reported that in addition to the practicum course they offer, they teach academic subjects and share professional courses with other groups of students at college and have a shortage of time to provide continuous follow-up for the student teachers by working closely with the school mentors. The unmanageable number of student teachers assigned to a mentor and a college supervisor is the second cause of the weak triadic interaction. College supervisors reported that in Practicum I and II, there are times when up to 23 students are assigned to a single supervisor. Mentors at the school reported that have to help up to 10 students at once without any reward.

The unobtrusive observation data also indicated that the weak triadic interaction has resulted in a lack of serious concern for the effective implementation of the practicum. Student teachers reported that many of the school mentors and college supervisors have not given serious attention to the practicum. The school mentors and college supervisors did not do continuous follow-ups for them. Some college supervisors may appear weekly and grade them without adequate follow-up. College supervisors attribute the inadequate follow-up of the student teachers to school mentors.

On the other hand, school mentors blame college supervisors for their inadequate supervision of their trainees. Some mentors said college supervisors gave inflated grades to student teachers without detailed and continuous follow-up. As a result, the student teachers did not seriously engage in their school-based practice. However, college supervisors blame mentors for the inflated marks they give to student teachers.

Concerning the personal relationships of student teachers with mentors, the student teachers reported that the relationships with their mentors and college supervisors were unsuitable. When the student teachers arrive at the school, mentors are less eager to work with student teachers as they progress through the school. One student teacher, Handamo, said:

> *"Some of our mentors are not happy when we observe their classroom. They feel that they are being evaluated and criticised for their teaching"* (HE, interviewed on August 25, 2021).

Teacher educators (college supervisors) also lack clarity on their expectations. A response from a student teacher Sulamo, about what happened when he did one of the most important assignments shows that there is still a lot to be done to make the whole practicum process clear. He stated;

> *"In doing one of the assignments for the independent teaching component of the practicum, I disagreed with the college supervision. The assignment is a reflection on independent teaching. My college supervisor told me that I could not reflect on my lesson. She told me I had to reflect on the school mentor's lesson. However, I was oriented to reflect on my lesson using 25 items. So, there is no clarity about what I was expected to do in the reflection session. I cannot reflect on the mentor's lesson when assuming independent teaching. This shows a lack of clarity in what we are expected to do, either on our side or the college supervisors' side. But at the orientation time, we were told to reflect on our lesson. But she insisted that we have to reflect on the mentor's lesson"* (ST interviewed on August 30, 2021).

5.4.1.5   *The status of the enabling environment*

The fifth theme in the research was how conducive the learning context (environment) was in promoting the trainees' active engagement with the learning tasks during the practicum programme. This discussion presents the findings in this theme in response to the third sub-research question, that is: *How well does the learning context (environment) at Hossana College of Teacher Education during the*

pre-service practicum programme encourage trainees to take an active role in the learning tasks that are being looked into in light of a constructivist framework for teacher education?

Many variables impact the learning environment of student teachers' participation in practicum experiences. Firstly, to recognise the many dimensions of the school environment that affect the student teachers during the practicum, the vice academic dean of the college, Abraham pointed out:

> *"The enabling environment depends on the nature of the school and the college. However, an enabling environment encompasses several elements, such as qualified teachers, teaching methodology, oppressive or democratic leadership, facilities, learner profile, socio-economic factors, etc. With all the constraints, the college could be regarded as a better enabling environment than any placement school because the college has better-qualified professionals, resources"* (AH, interviewed on September 15, 2021).

The practicum coordinator of the college, Teketel, also reported the about the status of the enabling environment:

> *"The designers of the programme should clarify the whole process of practicum and describe how the practicum can be organised and managed realistically in an Ethiopian classroom with full resources and a large number of students in the classroom"* (TF interviewed on September 17, 2021).

Teketel's description made it clear that the practicum should consider the existing condition of our college and school, the economic level of our country, the competence and commitment of all parties involved in the programme, and many other requirements. On the other hand, Kibemo, a college tutor, reported the following:

> *"Practicum is implemented without conducting deep investigations into the issue and in the absence of the enabling environment to carry out the programme." We, college teachers, are highly overloaded with the college's*

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regular and extension programmes. There isn't enough awareness of the programme, especially among the people who should care in the school" (KA, Reported on September 10, 2021).

Regarding the statement mentioned earlier, Kibemo explains that how the practicum is set up and supported will determine whether it is a productive, encouraging and enlightening experience (Baek & Ham, 2009). The cost of having tutors supervise students is high. Instead of formative evaluation, summative assessment receives a large portion of the supervision. Lewin (2004) says that when there are a lot of trainees, tutors may only have time for supervision instead of giving ongoing help. In nations with weak infrastructure and dispersed schools, it can be challenging to give large numbers of students' practical experience due to logistical and economic issues (Fekede, 2009). Under these conditions, it is hard to say that the college is running the practicum programme well.

From the other perspective, Sebsibe, a student teacher engaged in a practicum programme, was very concerned about his fate while explaining the enabling environment for the practicum:

> *"There is no one in the college or placement school to guide us or respond appropriately to our questions. Placement teachers do not even want us to visit their classrooms. Most cooperating school teachers are under qualified and lack the skill or confidence to give appropriate advice and support"* (SK, Interviewed on August 20, 2021).

Sebsibe's feelings indicate the absence of the enabling environment to carry out the practicum. All these complex problems and data from unobtrusive observations revealed that the practicum is practised without due consideration of the enabling environment, actual conditions of college teachers, student teachers, placement teachers and time available. Implementation, on the other hand, cannot happen without careful planning, which looks at the needs, changes that need to be made and resources that are needed to do what is planned.

Zenebech, the school mentor, discussed the school environment that made it possible for the practicum programme to be put into place:

> *"The student teachers are sent to our school in a situation where the necessary facilities are not fulfilled for them. We were not yet aware of the programme, and some arrangements, like reducing our mentoring workloads and orienting about mentoring skills, were not yet created. I can say that Practicum is adopting even though the environment isn't good for it"* (ZT, Interview on July 19, 2021).

As she explained, the practicum implementation would be complex without the necessary facilities and an organised, conducive environment for the student teachers. During their practicum, student teachers had to deal with the beliefs, ways of thinking, and ways of acting of the teachers who were supervising them.

During their one-year practicum, the beginner student teachers need a conducive school environment to develop positive feelings about themselves and others. Research also shows that student teacher persistence is more likely to happen in places where people respect each other and have high standards and attitudes.

As an answer to the fourth sub-research questions of the study: *What challenges are preventing the tasks and participants' roles from matching up with the assumptions and goals of the constructivist theory of learning in the pre-service practicum at Hosana Primary Teacher Education College?*

The following two broad themes emerged with their sub-themes of the tasks and activities that led to a mismatch between how the practicum programme was run and its goals and assumptions, as well as the roles that participants played.

5.4.1.6   *Tasks and activities that led to a mismatch between how the practicum programme was run and its goals and assumptions*

The sixth theme in the research was that the tasks and activities contributed to the incongruence between the practicum programme practices and the assumptions and

goals of the programme. Practicum experiences can be affected by several aspects of the learning environment (circled with multiple challenges). The multiple data sources used in this study showed that the tasks and activities in the ongoing programme have nothing to do with constructivist pedagogy or the goals of the programme. The four criteria used in the analysis to assess the qualities of the tasks and activities were transparency, consistency, theory-practice integration, and organization.

Just to show how the tasks or practical activities did not build on the basic assumptions underlying the constructive pedagogy and the goals of the programme, it would be sensible and reasonable to classify the types of tasks and activities involved in the programme and to organise the data in an iterative process from multiple data sources. There were three types of tasks studied in the pre-service practicum programme: tasks of portfolio compilation, practicum assessment, and reflective dialogue of college supervisors with the student teachers (teaching conferences).

i) Portfolio Development Tasks

Interviews and reviews of samples of portfolios were used to find out more about the tasks involved in building a portfolio.

Transparency: Portfolios are orderly, meaningful, and systematic collections of students' work. Portfolios should continue demonstrating the student's efforts, development, and successes (Seldin, 2004). The documents reviewed showed that what the student teachers wrote in their portfolios (if they are called that at all) were mere responses to the questions in the teacher observation and self-evaluation form. The student teachers in this study could not document and define their teaching practices, articulate their professional expertise or reflect on what, how and why they taught in the portfolios that were examined. Student teachers were not required to do systematic reviews of their practice or collect data on their students or schools. They were also not given a place where they could connect what they learned in college and how it related to what they did in the classroom.

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There appears to be a lack of conceptual basis for using portfolios. Actual practice seems to define its purposes in programmatic (that is, as a requirement in a programme) rather than pedagogical (development of a student's understanding) terms. The teacher education programme does not seem to regard the development of teaching portfolios for knowledge as a primary purpose of the portfolio. Yet, the programme document says that one of the best things about the process is that it makes teachers think critically about their teaching.

Consistency: The content of the reflection, as observed in the format and sample reports, is likely to belong to the technical-rationality model as long as the student-teachers are encouraged to rate their observations or experiences using the knowledge they have acquired in the programme. Even when they were expected to reason out their ratings, there was an underlying assumption that they would be using that knowledge to depend on. This then shows a sizable gap between the actual practice and the programme's theory. The main goal of portfolio building in constructivist teacher education, which is to see how people think about problems they see and how willing they are to question their own values, beliefs, and assumptions, was not clear.

Even the tasks that are already part of building a portfolio are not done consistently, as the practicum coordinator said:

> *"We advise them, we give them guidelines, and we tell them to compile every single piece they do (during school placement). However, some instructors expect their supervisees to complete all of the tasks assigned to them, while others focus solely on teaching evaluation. So, the clients of the second advisor don't worry about their portfolio"* (TF, interviewed on September 17, 2021).

Theory-Practice Integration: No attempt was evident in the 'portfolios' to include personal theories, explanations, or individual reactions to challenges. The five- or six-page reports that student teachers write after their practicum sessions are called

'portfolios' in the programme. However, they are just a collection of short, declarative phrases or statements that answer the questions given in the format.

In light of what the literature states about the uses of teaching portfolios (see Loughran & Corrigan, 1995; Seldin, 2004), the materials compiled as portfolios in the programme can hardly deserve the name itself because they did not serve as a way of initiating dialogue, be it with themselves or with others, about the problematic nature of teaching and learning from their perspective. It seems that Loughran and Corrigan's (1995) notion that portfolios are a good way to learn about a student teacher's philosophy of teaching and learning does not align with this study.

Despite the inherently social nature involved in the process of building a student-teacher portfolio, the reviewed portfolios appeared to be written individually by student teachers, and their contents had not been derived from the individual's interaction with learners in the schools or perhaps from observed cooperating teachers to rate certain features during the practice teaching experiences. As a result, these portfolios do not let the student teachers put together their different experiences and insights, which go against the idea that knowledge is a social construction.

Organisations: The portfolios reviewed for this study were used independently for the Practicum IV session to see the organisation of the activities. The data collected from student teachers' interviews confirmed that they were not informed that the development of the portfolio should begin during the first year and continue until graduation, even though the TESO document recommends doing so. Even though TESO's recommendation and the teacher education programme's attempt to make portfolio compilation a part of the programme show the organisation's good side, the lack of information on how to manage the process and the inconsistent way portfolio compilation is used, as explained by the practicum coordinator, shows the organisation's poor management, which hurts the quality of the organisation.

ii) Teaching Conference Tasks

Interviews, observations of teaching conferences and reviews of the student teaching evaluation checklist are all ways to get information about the tasks in teaching conferences.

Transparency: The student-teaching evaluation checklist required the college supervisors to hold a discussion (reflective dialogue) with the student teachers observed and to include the reaction of the observed student teachers and the amount of time spent on the discussion. However, the observed teaching conferences did not produce data confirming this occurrence. Despite the aim of these dialogues, supposedly to enhance the student teachers' reflectivity, they were characterised by traditional feedback. Therefore, the element in the evaluation checklist enables one to say that the tasks have external transparency. On the other hand, its impracticality shows a lack of transparency.

Consistency: In light of the evaluation checklist content, anyone would expect the post-teaching conferences to focus on generic teaching skills and knowledge like lesson planning, students' activities and classroom management. Nevertheless, the teaching conferences mentioned critical subject-specific pedagogy as well. This shows that the subject-specific college supervisors were not satisfied with the existing evaluation tool.

The attempt to review the supervisor's evaluation tool has disclosed a visible inconsistency between what the subject methodology courses teach and what is emphasised in the practicum evaluation tools. The use of these evaluation tools suggests that generic teaching skills are emphasised more than pedagogical content knowledge, as long as all departments use the same tools, no matter how different their pedagogical content knowledge domains.

Cooperating teachers and student teachers do not meet to talk about teaching and discussions between teacher educators and student teachers are mostly led by the supervisor, which indicate that the goals and practices of the component do not align.

Theory - Practice Integration: The interview also confirmed that there are no observations of videotaped lessons to encourage critical analysis, nor are there stimulated recall discussions in post-observation conferences between the supervisor and supervisee during practicum sessions.

The student teachers in the individual interviews disclosed that most of their supervisors, even those with whom they have had stimulating recall discussions, do not spare much time to allow them to describe, explain, examine and evaluate their teaching after supervision. The teacher educators also said they were too busy to do things as suggested in the programme. In the interview, Erdolo, blamed his colleagues for their selfishness in the following way:

> *"Everyone knows that some of us are too preoccupied with supervising student teachers on field experiences and advising them on action research projects. They are not doing things the right way. But they strongly claim the work because they don't want to miss the paid money. I remember one case where one practicum supervisor finished supervising eight student teachers within two hours in eight classes. What does it mean? He spent about 10 to 15 minutes supervising each student. He didn't even have time to talk to them after his observation. He told them to see him later in his office. Then I don't know what he did. But finally, he gave grades to the students. I'm sure he wouldn't have taken the responsibility if there had been no payment for it"* (ED, interviewed on September 8, 2021).

This example demonstrates that teaching conferences are sometimes held solely to conform to policy. Such practices cast some doubt about the existence of reflective dialogues. The student teachers' complaints about their college supervisors' inability to spare enough time for the conferences also show that the meetings do not support the opportunities for integration of theory and practice where the student teachers have to describe, explain, examine and evaluate their teaching. This means the dominant practices maintain the traditional theory-practice divide.

Organisations: First of all, the requirement of post teaching conferences between student teachers and supervisors has made the programme appear somewhat organised because it has spared time and space. But the few attempts that were seen to have reflective dialogues between the two groups and the fact that there were no teaching conferences between student teachers and cooperating teachers indicates that the task to improve student teachers' ability to reflect was not organised well.

iii) Practicum Assessment Practices

Assessment provides critical information about the student teachers' progress and ability to accomplish the instructional objectives. It should also assist learners in diagnosing their learning (Haigh & Ell, 2014). To this end, the type and manner in which assessment is employed could indicate the nature of practicum implementation. Written reports, oral presentations and classroom observations are used as effective assessment mechanisms by the colleges and partner schools to evaluate student teachers' school-based practice performance.

Based on their observations in Practicum I and II, student teachers are mainly engaged in observing the general school environment and producing written reports based on their observations. Students also present oral information about their direct-school experience to their classmates when they return to college. The college supervisors assess the written and oral reports and grade the student teachers' performance. School mentors are also involved in the evaluation of student teachers.

However, the assessment practice of the practicum is marred by many problems, although the college has assessment guidelines for all four components of the practicum. The challenge inherent to the practicum is that its delivery practices are incompatible with the assessment procedures. One of the major problems is that assessment is carried out for grading purposes rather than to support students' learning. The student teachers and teacher educators agreed on this point. For example, during Practicum III, student teachers help their mentors put together reports, which they then give to their supervisors.

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But most of the student teachers and teacher educators indicated that there is neither a presentation nor feedback provision for the students. Moreover, the independent teaching component assessment is based on one or two days of observations and copied assessments. Solomon, a student teacher reported:

"Assessment is done based on your previous grades. The practicum assessment is not based on actual observation and so on. The college supervisor collects students' grade reports and gives marks. He [the college supervisor] did not assist me in identifying my weaknesses. The college supervisor comes to the school to grade me. It is difficult to learn from one day of observation" (SB, interviewed on August 13, 2021).

In the same way, Erkebo, a third-year student teacher, said the following about the process and standard of assessment:

"After my third practicum, my supervisor gave me a final evaluation. There were four possible grades for me: A, B, C and D. I received a C. I did not understand the criteria for these four levels and was unaware of the factors my supervisor considered when making the evaluations. He only made general remarks, mostly compliments. Therefore, I was unsure of my teaching's strengths and weaknesses and why I received a C on his evaluation. I couldn't judge myself or say what I thought" (EA, interviewed on August 27, 2021).

Similarly, a teacher educator, Wondwosen, stated:

"The assessment of activities by the teacher educators is for grading purposes only. The student teachers cannot compile reports in English. So, most of them copy these assignments from previous work. We know that. The assessment by the school mentors is also inflated. They give the same grade to all the students. So, assessment in the practicum is done artificially by considering the students' background and other issues. The assessment is not made based on valid, authentic evidence collected over an extended

period. Instead, they are more subjective" (WE, interviewed on September 01, 2021).

Another teacher educator, Ewenetu also reiterated:

"Though the practicum is a collective/joint activity, each trainee is expected to produce a portfolio of his own based on his understanding. However, many trainees copy one another's work and present it as their own. This complicates the assessment process" (ET, interviewed on September 03, 2021).

The cooperating teachers, however, feel that the problem with the assessment stems from the items used to assess the student teachers' practices. A close look at some of the items reveals that they are particularly related to the personal dimensions of the student teachers rather than teaching and learning-related practices. The assessment guidelines are less practical and are not periodically changed. The cooperating teachers reported that assessment items needed to be revised and related to actual teaching and learning practices. Student teachers also said that many of the things on the school practicum assessment have nothing to do with teaching.

In addition, school mentors complain that their evaluation of student teachers is usually disregarded during grading. School mentors are not happy with the grading system of college supervisors either. The programme was not jointly planned with the schools. Thus, schools fail to play their major role in the practicum. They feel that the grades given to the student teachers are inflated. Some mentors said that sometimes there are cases where grades are given based on personal relationships like ethnicity. They said this discourages mentors from seriously following the student teachers and providing genuine feedback and marks. Mentors also reported that since college supervisors predominantly determine student teachers' grades, the student teachers did not seriously accept the comments and feedback given to them. They do what their college supervisors say, rather than the mentors.

5.4.1.7   Roles of participants

The data analysis revealed that the roles of participants had not changed as much as the framework of the programme required. The data analysed from multiple sources reveals findings regarding the roles of programme's key participants' backgrounds: student teachers, cooperating teachers and teacher educators.

i) Student Teachers' Roles

The data sources used to investigate their roles in the programme process were interviews, classroom and teaching conference observations and portfolios. The criteria used in the data analysis to assess the functions of the student teachers were reflectivity, inter-subjectivity, negotiation, and regulation. When it comes to reflectivity, the word 'reflection' is often used in the programme's different tasks and activities (Schön, 1983, 1987).

Reflection: Reflective practice, reflective thinking or reflective teaching, has become a popular discourse in the literature on teacher education and development. A growing body of literature in various countries asserts that reflection positively impacts school quality and teacher professional development. As noted on several occasions in this study, the *Teacher Education System Overhaul* (Ministry of Education, 2003) has emphasised the importance of reflexivity for Ethiopian teachers and, for that matter, for Ethiopian teacher educators. *Reflexivity* refers to critical self-reflection. 'Criticality' is not a harmful or destructive activity. It is based on optimism and hope.

In the social sciences, reflexivity is an accepted concept that requires us to critically examine the consequences of our guiding beliefs, professional knowledge and actions. As beginning teachers, the practicum must develop the habit of self-examination as a critical element of our review of teaching and learning in the classroom. In this way, the practicum could be thought of as an action research project with the children in the classroom, the student teacher, the cooperating teachers, and the college supervisors as the key participants. The practicum is an opportunity to apply knowledge and skills to develop a learning activity, review its

strengths and shortcomings, and ask ourselves: How might I change what I did to ensure that my students have a better educational experience?

As stated above, from its inception, when the practicum was intended to be implemented, reflection was an integral part. When done correctly, reflection ensures that the student teacher learns from their own and other people's experiences.

In this research process, the issue of reflection appeared in the responses of the practicum coordinator of the college, some student teachers, some teacher educators and the academic vice-dean of the college. On closer inspection of the guidelines that the Ethiopian Ministry of Education developed for the practicum, one of the goals was to think about how things were done in the classroom.

However, teacher educators and the academic vice-dean reported that the actual reflection process of student teachers is a mere copy of students' previous works. Abraham, the academic vice-dean indicated that there is no reflection on actual practice as student teachers organise previous reports and lack the skill of reflection. He further suggests that:

> *"People prepare the portfolios and reflection reports for the student teachers. So, the students are not going through a reflection process. They are copies of the previous works. Hence, many do not know what reflection is as they don't practice it"* (AH, interviewed on September 15, 2021).

Teacher educators also reported that the reflection is not being implemented properly for a variety of reasons. A teacher educator, Erdolo commented:

> *"Student teachers do not know how to reflect. They simply replicate previous works. We ask them to write the reflection in English, which is very difficult for them. They merely report this, and that must be done. We don't also support them. There is no feedback, and we don't ask them to explain what they did"* (ED, Interview on September 08, 2021).

Another teacher educator, Mencha also reiterated:

"The student teachers and educators are not ready to work very seriously." We simply collect the assignments and grade them. It is just a fulfilment, as reflection activities are required in the curriculum/guideline. We do not know clearly what is expected in reflection. Many of us do not apply the concept of reflective practice in our teaching careers. We simply relate the theory to teachers' practice. The student teachers also write, "I have done this and that." There is no proper reflection" (MS, interviewed on September 06, 2021).

Student teachers reported that reflection is an evaluation of the teaching practices. In the practicum, they must reflect on their practice using a list of items prepared by the college and organise a report. The student teachers also reported copying of portfolios and reflection activities because of a lack of skills and proper supervision and support. A student teacher, Tariku stated:

"We answer the questions listed in the module. But most of the time, the answers are the same from student to student. That is what we do. But when writing the responses, we see the previous students' works. We ask who scored an "A" and so on. Then we base our answers on that student's responses" (TA, interviewed on August 09, 2021).

Another student teacher, Gisachew stated that:

"We reflect what we observe. Some teachers ask us to reflect on all that we have written in our portfolio; others ask us to reflect only on those things related to the items in the assessment checklist. Many others didn't give people the chance to talk about their mistakes and learn from those of others" (GA, interviewed on August 11, 2021).

Similarly, in the individual interview discussions with student teacher, Handamo, teacher educators disempowered their rights to defend their ideas, feelings, and values. He said;

"When my supervisor, for example, gives his feedback, he does not begin with your strengths; he tells you your weaknesses or focuses on the opposing side. When I tried to raise a question, we tended to enter into a confrontation. Then he said, "I have finished, that is all." He never allows anyone to question his comments. Trying again to explain my reason, I told him I followed the textbook and the teacher's guide. But he refused to listen to me, saying that the book was not the bible. Sometimes, he tended to call you nasty names, such as "keshim" (Amharic slang meaning "silly/awkward")" (HE interviewed on August 25, 2021).

In general, student teachers conceptualise reflection by directly reporting what they have observed or encountered during the practicum or responding to the items listed in the module. The interviewees' discussions with college teacher educators reveal that they consider the practicum a chance for students to put their classroom knowledge into practice. They further recommend that the practicum comes at the end of the training, just after the student teachers have taken all the campus courses.

There is also a similar response about the purpose of the practicum from teacher educators. Student teachers should first learn the theories and then go to school to put these into practice. This assumption is against the reflective model, which is the basis for the teacher training programme colleges should implement based on the constructivist learning theory. The reflective model assumes that theory and practice should complement each other. The findings also show that in the colleges, no seminars or conferences are organised to enable student teachers to reflect on their teaching experience. College supervisors only ask student teachers to present their portfolios mainly for assessment.

(Inter) Subjectivity: In terms of (inter) subjectivity, which is involved in personal and social processes in the construction of knowledge, limited opportunities have been provided in the practicum sessions. Most tasks in the practicum courses do not require students to work in pairs or small groups during their portfolio development tasks to encourage interactions that foster individual and collective commitment. The

instructors in the interview confirmed that they do not give such assignments in pairs or groups for fear that some students might depend on others in the group work.

Negotiation: As regards negotiation, which concerns involvement of participants in collaborative construction of meaning and decision-making, the programme lacks this quality at different levels. First of all, in the curriculum design, the main debate was about the issue of the weight assigned to content knowledge and practicum. Despite the fact that both reflective/inquiry-oriented and personalistic teacher education paradigms, which are both shaped by the constructivist learning paradigm, attempt to respond to the self-perceived needs and concerns of trainees rather than define the content in advance (Zeichner, 1983), this issue has been debatable to date, even at the department level. All arguments are based on the intuitions of the teacher educators, and no effort has been made to hear what the student teachers have to say about what they learned and how they learned it.

Secondly, the lack of pre-teaching conferences between supervisors and student teachers takes away the student teachers' right to negotiate. The pre-teaching conference would have given the student teachers a chance to find out what the focus of the upcoming classroom visit would be and to negotiate to justify or change their plans, ideas and feelings.

Regulation: The interview data of teacher educators confirmed that there were no attempts by the staff to get their students to keep learning journals. Even though the programme document suggested different ways for learners to self-regulate, they were not able to do so because they were not allowed to use reflective journals or attend seminars. Reflective journals motivate student teachers to evaluate their actions and experiences in the classroom during their field-based learning; however, they did not use reflective journals nor did they attend seminars.

ii) Cooperating Teachers' Roles

The data sources used to investigate the roles of cooperating teachers in the existing school-college partnership are interviews, conference observations and school report reviews. As confirmed in the cooperating teacher interviews, all primary school

teachers, regardless of their qualifications, experience and commitment, were made to participate in the programme in the primary schools where the student teachers are placed for the practicum. However, they reported that they had not been given any training or briefing to prepare them for this job (Boz & Boz, 2006). As a result, the teachers' role to support, guide and advise them during their school placement does not seem to be in place, as has been confirmed by all other parties. For example, one student teacher, Gisachew said this in his interview:

> *"I remember seeing the school teacher only in the first week of the placement, where I had to observe his classes. I observed him only for two periods. Then he gave me the book and a duster and disappeared"* (GA, interviewed on August 11, 2021).

In his interview, a teacher educator, Ewenetu, who seemed to agree, said the following:

> *"For example, when the student teacher is practicing teaching, they (cooperative teachers) need to be in class to assist the practicing teacher. Most of them give up the class and go away. They won't be around, and they won't help the student. This is one. Another thing is the evaluation itself. They are giving full marks to the student teachers. They don't want to be strict, though they haven't been attending"* (ET, interviewed on September 3, 2021).

The interview with a practicum coordinator of the college showed that cooperating teachers do not help, guide, or give advice to student teachers while they are in schools:

> *"I would rather say there is nothing as such. When our student teachers arrive at the schools where they are assigned, the school teachers hand in their classes to them and disappear from the schools. So, it is better to say the cooperating teachers' roles are non-existent. It is the coordinators who assign student teachers, follow their attendance, and help them if they have some problems. But these people cannot assist the student teachers with pedagogical issues"* (TF, interviewed on September 17, 2021).

Thus, the 'immediate supervisor' of the student teachers' day-to-day progress does not have the proper training to instruct student teachers. The supervisor with the appropriate training in teacher education is not always available. This demonstrates how student teachers end up in a difficult situation. The cooperating teacher, named Ayalew, had this to say in response to the blame:

> *"There is no interaction between the college and primary school teachers about this teaching and learning process. We were like this for the first six or five years. But now we don't do this. I think the teachers (college instructors) come one or two times and evaluate and give marks. Even the teachers (college instructors) don't ask what the mistakes were of the students (student teachers), even if we don't interact with them (college instructors). Even if they do not give us any reading or training about this so there isn't any help"* (AS, interviewed on July 23, 2021).

The absence of the cooperating teachers' roles was also evidenced in the field visit when I tried to capture data from their pre-and post-teaching conferences with the student teachers. It was observed that supervision of practicing student teachers is facilitated by a site coordinator or a lead teacher who helps coordinate placements and serves as a liaison officer between the school and the college. This was further confirmed by reviewing the school reports on the performance of the practicing student teachers. These reports, which the actual classroom teacher should have written, were filled out by the school coordinators who acted as lead teachers. As shown in the overview of the school reports, the issues included in the report format are all related to the student teachers' outside classroom experiences. It is hard to say that the classroom teachers act as cooperating teachers when they have not done anything to prepare for the role other than learn how to teach in a classroom, because there does not seem to be any effort to bring the students' experiences into the discussions.

Almost all student-teachers, in their interviews, mentioned the type of help that these cooperating teachers rendered, that is, they gave the material needed, they allow themselves to be observed during the first week of the placement, and some of them

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lend a hand when requested. The cooperating teachers themselves also corroborated this fact in their interviews.

The college's practicum coordinator also said that most of the expected help from schools, which was more about administration than teaching, came from the school coordinators, who usually consisted of just one or two people. At the beginning of the year, a sort of workshop was set up for these coordinators.

iii) Teacher Educator Roles

The data sources used to investigate the tasks in theoretical courses were interviews and classroom observations. The findings from the multiple data sources confirmed that the teacher educators had assumed all the duties and responsibilities of the programme activities. In their discussion, for example, the teacher educators revealed that they worked on a very tight schedule in both campus-based and field-based activities. They also mentioned that student teachers copied each other's work or wrote fictitious school observation reports in their portfolios. It was thus not surprising to discover numerous cases of copying and cheating or writing fictitious reports. Since teacher educators only visited a small number of schools during practicum placements because the schools were spread over a large area and had poor infrastructure, it makes sense that their feedback became more evaluative than clinical.

This circumstance, in turn, has given rise to the current system of supervision, which in turn adds to concerns by student teachers that college lecturers are not always accessible and unhelpful when they are (Kuter & Koç, 2009; Paker, 2005). When one considers the conditions in which the task of supervision is carried out, these complaints are easy to understand. The college supervisor is responsible for several pupils assigned to a faraway school within a specific time frame. Most college supervisors spend most of their time and energy on campus where they work. They are too busy supervising student teachers in schools that are located far away.

As a result, it is difficult to think that these supervisors can appropriately assist student teachers in developing suitable teaching styles when they only see limited

portions of teaching performances in relatively unfamiliar classrooms. This means that the professional development of student teachers seems to be more of a public relations effort than a serious one.

5.4.2 Data emerging from the Observations

This section presents an overview of the data collected from practicum conference observations.

5.4.2.1 *Post-teaching conferences*

The researcher examined a wide range of meetings with varying lengths of time. Discussions ranged from less than five minutes to more than fifteen minutes. Even though many of the themes and domains discussed at the conferences were identical, the depth and specificity of the discussions varied greatly. The length of the meetings was directly connected to the specificity of the college supervisors' comments. The most extended conference observed was between one supervisor and one student teacher, who were exceptionally diligent and fluent as the college supervisor gave specific advice about the student teachers' lessons (see Appendix Q). In contrast, the shortest meeting was between a supervisor and a student teacher, who were too apprehensive about uttering a word in response to the questions raised.

The conferences seemed to share the same pattern of presenting comments: beginning with positive comments, moving on to negative ones, and concluding with confirmatory remarks on the positive side. Three domains of teacher knowledge were addressed in all the conferences: Classroom management, Lesson plans, and subject-specific pedagogy. These patterns are explored as follows:

1. Classroom management

Classroom management was the pedagogical topic that came up most frequently in meetings between college supervisors and student teachers. The most commonly discussed issues were whether or not the student teacher walked around the

classroom was effective at capturing and holding the students' attention, was in charge of the situation and used an audible voice. The discussions also typically covered behavioural goals. These subjects have something to do with the Student Teacher Observation Form.

Accordingly, Moodley's (2003) observations, the conduct and viewpoints of students are not entirely objective and can be considered subjective in nature. During discussions, certain student-teachers identified as a group of students whose behaviour was exceptional during a teaching session. Therefore, a number of student-teachers experience frustration when faced with students who are difficult to manage. The students' preoccupation with play and disruptive behaviour has resulted in a challenging classroom environment, leaving the student-teacher struggling to maintain control. In support, a student-teacher by the name of Endriyas shared his views with college tutor during a teaching conference,

> *"During my time of teaching in the classroom, students were frequently talkative and engaged in playful behaviour, resulting in a lack of attentiveness towards my instruction and other related matters" (EE, August 24, 2021).*

In a related context, Handamo, a student-teacher, expressed in the teaching conferences that

> *"Instructing in an actual classroom presented difficulty. I encountered students whose demeanor presented a challenge to regulate and who exhibited a lack of acknowledgement regarding the significance of education. A multitude of occurrences took place, including frequent tardiness, unexplained absences from class, non-attendance during extended class periods, and failure to return to class following scheduled breaks" (HE, Sep. 13, 2021).*

Thus, during the observation conference, it was noted that managing students was a topic of discussion among the student-teachers. This was in relation to their perception of their professional responsibilities as pre-service teachers. Pre-service teachers were able to comprehend that behavior regulation was a challenging

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responsibility, as they were given the chance to exercise control over the classroom and manage behavior (Zulkifli, A., Sulaiman, N. and Mohamed, S. 2019).

During the observation conference between the teacher-educators and student-teachers, it was observed that a number of them encountered difficulties in managing student behavior. They were cognizant of the fact that failure to maintain control over student behavior could have a detrimental effect on the classroom environment (Wei & Yasin, 2017; Flower, McKenna, & Haring, 2017).

One of the student-teachers, Hammame, expressed in her conversation with college tutor that

> *"Behavior holds utmost significance in the learning process" (HL, July 15th, 2021).*

Hammame further delved into the notion that

> *"My inability to maintain control of the class can impede students' ability to learn (HL, July 15th, 2021).*

Erkebo, a fellow student-teacher, corroborated the aforementioned statement during conversations with his instructor.

> *"The loss of control over the class at the outset would result in the termination of the lesson" (EA, July 22, 2021).*

Therefore, the student-teachers perceived a need for supplementary training in behavior management due to their difficulties with classroom management prior to embarking on their own teaching careers (Zulkifli, A., Sulaiman, N. and Mohamed, S. 2019).

2. Lesson plans

One of the topics that came up the most frequently in the teacher-student conferences was lesson planning. On one level, lesson planning was just a

necessary part of the relationship between the teacher and the students that needed to be managed (Konig et al., 2020). According to Sudirman (2017:115), the lesson plan serves as a guide for educators to execute the instruction for every aspect of the lesson. Consequently, all the elements incorporated in the lesson plan pertain to the teaching and learning process, encompassing the techniques and approaches to be employed in the classroom.

Nevertheless, the development of lesson plans holds significant importance and serves as a crucial component within the pedagogical framework. Despite presenting a challenge for the student-teacher, the experience is expected to yield benefits for the individual's future teaching endeavors (Konig et al., 2020).

The formulation of a lesson plan is a crucial preliminary measure prior to the execution of educational instruction. Effective implementation of learning necessitates meticulous planning (Karlstrm, M., & Hamza, K. 2018). . Develop a teaching and learning plan that can be incorporated into the learning implementation plan, also known as a lesson plan or other related terms such as instructional design or learning scenarios. The lesson plan comprises fundamental competencies, measurable indicators, instructional materials, pedagogical approaches, learning media, and educational resources, in addition to an assessment and evaluation component (Sudirman, 2017: 115).

Lesson plans need to be reviewed. The focus of the teaching conferences was documentation at a higher level, particularly lesson plans and observation forms. The Student-Teacher Observation Form is a key component in assessing student teaching marks, and it appeared to serve as a reference for college supervisors' observations in classes and conference comments.

The supervisors' ratings of their student teachers were listed on the form. At the bottom, there is room for comments. The college supervisor frequently begins conferences by asking the student teacher to describe their strengths and weaknesses. Most of the student teachers did not want to talk about their strengths, perhaps thinking that the supervisors knew everything very well, as the longstanding

culture dictates. During conferences, supervisors resorted to the observation form and notes to recall lessons and their responses. They did not attempt to elaborate on the ratings.

Thus, the student-teachers reported that lesson planning constituted one of the most anxiety-inducing responsibilities (Konig et al., 2020). The study revealed that although planning was advantageous in terms of facilitating class readiness, pre-service teachers' encountered difficulties in comprehending the process of lesson planning (Karlstrm, M., & Hamza, K. 2018). One of the primary sources of confusion was related to the structure and layout of the plans. The lesson plan format mandated by the academic institution differed from the lesson plan format utilized by the schools where students were placed for practical training.

One of the students, Sebsibe, provided support for the aforementioned argument during a discussion with his college tutor. Sebsibe noted that

> *"The lesson plan format utilized in the placement school was straightforward and comprehensible due to its emphasis on the central concept being taught and a corresponding demonstration of how it would be taught" (SK, August 3, 2021).*

Sebsibe further elaborated:

> *"The college's template, noting that it demanded an excessive amount of detail by requiring comprehensive descriptions of each activity that would be presented to students" (SK, August 3, 2021).*

Similarly, Molito, a student-teacher, expressed his views during conversations with the college tutor that

> *"The lesson plan template utilized by the institution [the college] did not facilitate my ability to connect with the level of learning" (MA, July 22, 2021).*

At times, certain student teachers encounter difficulties while undertaking their teaching practicum, particularly in the process of creating lesson plans. In the teaching conference, a student-teacher named Tariku expressed

> *"I felt difficulty in developing a lesson plan. I know the significance of a lesson plan in the teaching and learning process, despite the challenges associated with its development. Thus, it is imperative for me to have a lesson plan in place during the teaching and learning process" (TA, August 10, 2021).*

Thus, the majority of student-teachers who were observed during teaching conferences expressed a desire for additional support regarding the planning of lessons that cater to diverse learning levels. Moreover, the student-teachers expressed a perceived need for further exposure to planning for diverse levels and acquiring proficiency in crafting lesson plans that can aptly direct their pedagogical approach (Konig et al., 2020).

3. Subject-specific pedagogy

Pre-service teachers need subject-specific teaching methods skills to teach a subject effectively (Holins, E. 2011; Kersting et al., 2016; Roofe, C. G., & Miller, P. 2013**).** Thus, in each of the conferences, the issue of subject-specific pedagogy was discussed. Although subject-specific teaching methods concerns were not given any room on the evaluation form, the supervisors utilised their notes to discuss these issues. The discussions generally covered a wide range of topics, were deep enough to explore the nature of the subject-specific pedagogy, and were centred on methods for teaching specific subjects to students. Some examples of these strategies are how to teach skills and what it means when a teacher asks a certain question at a certain point in the lesson (Blömeke et al. 2016).

In relation to the aforementioned concerns, Ewenetu, a college tutor, highlighted the following during the individual interview, in a more discerning notion that

> *"A student-teacher is anticipated to possess knowledge on the appropriate utilization of various subject-specific pedagogical approaches during*

instruction. This scenario can be achieved through a comprehensive training program that offers ample opportunities for acquiring a thorough understanding of pedagogical methodologies. The insufficiency of employing subject-specific methodologies and comprehension was observed during the period of instructional practice. A number of trainees exhibited a deficiency in their ability to appropriately apply subject-specific teaching skills" (ET, August 24, 2021).

In the same vein, during my interviews with student-teachers, some trainees expressed the belief that courses focused on teaching methodology specific to a particular subject were redundant in nature, as the concepts covered were already addressed through general pedagogical courses. The students expressed that they found the course to be ambiguous, and their college teachers agreed with this assessment.

On the other hand, Gisachew, a student-teacher, expounded during his discussions with college tutor in the teaching conferences that:

"The subject methodology courses, which were recently introduced, are of utmost significance and are part of the third-year curriculum. The approach familiarizes us with the pedagogy of tailoring our instruction to consider our pre-existing knowledge, comprehension level, and other relevant factors. The course in question helps me and my colleagues communicate subject matter effectively" (GA, August 12, 2021).

Student-teachers criticism of subject-specific methodology courses may have been the result of a failure to understand the course's guiding principles or a departure from the intended delivery strategy (Shulman, 1987; 2004). To substantiate this with valid evidence, I conducted an examination of the pedagogical techniques employed in the social science teaching method course tailored for the social science discipline. My prior academic training in the subject of history during my undergraduate studies served as the inspiration for this inquiry. The module's

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contents lacked specificity in terms of their applicability to social science pedagogy, instead focusing on a broader generic pedagogy. It is imperative that each course be accompanied by a teaching methodology that is specific to its subject matter. In line with the above contention, Blömeke et al. (2016) have identified that the insufficiency of qualified staff with appropriate pedagogical training and experience is a challenge that higher education institutions encounter, which may be linked to their inability to accomplish the task at hand.

When it came to having conversations with students, I believe the college supervisors were hesitant to be confrontational. Student teachers probably wanted to avoid arguments with their supervisors since teacher educators gave grades at the conclusion of each placement. Therefore, the data demonstrates that both parties attempted to avoid direct conflict and disagreement and conceal their differences. So, college supervisors were usually nice to student teachers and tried to boost their confidence, and student teachers agreed with whatever suggestions college supervisors made (at least during the meeting).

Even though the evaluation form has a place for the student teacher to write down any actions they plan to take to prepare for the next lesson, as well as their general thoughts on the evaluation and how much time they spent talking about it after the observation, these actions were not seen during any of the conferences, except for the supervisors' advice to improve the points that were raised. Therefore, recent research has focused on the capacity to effectively manage the pedagogical requirements of the classroom (Blömeke et al., 2016), as well as the aptitude for subject-specific expertise and its application within instructional contexts.

5.4.3   Data emerging from Document Analysis

The following sub-sections present an overview of the information found in documents like portfolios, checklists for evaluating practicums and school reports on the progress of teacher trainees.

5.4.3.1   School Report on the progress of student-teachers

Despite my expectation of examining the contents of the cooperating teachers' reports on the performance of the practicing student teachers under their guidance and supervision, the attempt to rate their performance was rated only by the school coordinators. The report format requires school coordinators to rate the student teachers' participation in school activities other than teaching, using a five-point scale. The school report checklist consists of six items: giving specific ideas for how to improve school management; being willing to help others; wanting to do things after school; giving specific ideas for how to improve school management; being willing to help students with special needs and explaining the importance of the extracurricular activity or activities done.

The report form also asks the school coordinators to write two things in the 'Additional Comments' section: If there is anything that a student teacher, either individually or in a team, has done voluntarily other than teaching, and if there is any effort made by the student teacher to help students at differentiated achievement levels outside the classroom (see Appendix J). The required report from the school coordinators does not invite the cooperating teachers to say anything on pedagogical issues; neither the generic skills nor the subject-pedagogic skills are addressed.

5.4.3.2   Checklist for practicum evaluation

The attempt to review the supervisor's evaluation tool has shown a visible inconsistency between what the subject methodology courses teach and what is emphasised in the practicum evaluation tools. The document reviewed for this study was the student teaching evaluation form used by the supervisors for Practicum IV. This document has four parts: teaching practice evaluation, lesson plan evaluation, teaching material evaluation and the student teacher's lesson observation report (see Appendix K).

The teaching practice evaluation has twenty-six items rated on a five-point scale ranging from 0–4 in five sub-parts. The lesson's goals are discussed in the first four items. The following five items cover the activities' nature. The final five questions

concern assessment tools that student instructors must complete. The following eight points discuss how teachers should behave. The last four items speak to the conduct of the students (See Appendix K).

The supervisor writes specific comments on the lesson after rating the student teacher using the five-point scale, highlighting two aspects of the lesson that went well, one or two areas that may need improvement and general remarks. The pedagogical content knowledge may be the only portion used in the supervisory process. Thereafter, the supervisor has a post-observation talk with the student teacher. For this reason, there is a separate space on the evaluation form where the student teacher must write down what they need to do for the next lesson, any general comments about the evaluation and the amount of time spent on the post-observation discussion.

The second part of this document is a checklist for lesson plan evaluation where the supervisor rates the lesson plan using an eleven-item checklist on a five-point scale and finally writes general comments (See Appendix K).

In the third part of this document, that is, the teaching material evaluation form, the supervisor evaluates the quality of teaching materials used during the teaching using a six-item checklist on a five-point scale. Lastly, they write general comments in the space below the checklist (see Appendix K).

The final part of this document is also a checklist for evaluating student teachers' observation reports. The checklist consists of seven five-point scale items. These seven items are based on the requirements in the student teacher's lesson observation (See Appendix K).

The use of these evaluation tools suggests that generic teaching skills are emphasised and pedagogical content knowledge is not taken into account in the programme, as long as all departments use the same tools, no matter the difference in their pedagogical content knowledge domains.

5.4.3.3   Student teaching practicum portfolios

One of the documents reviewed for this study was the material that student teachers used for Practicum IV. This material is believed to be part of their portfolio for the course. It consisted of three parts: a classroom observation report form, a lesson plan form with self-evaluation form and an annual lesson plan evaluation form. All of the portfolios that were examined were made up of a collection of short, declarative sentences or phrases that were written in response to the prompts in the format. Each portfolio was five or six pages long.

In the first part, *the classroom observation report form,* student teachers observe the cooperating teacher while teaching the major subject area during the first week of the school placement and write an observation report in which their reflective comments are included. Student teachers include teacher activities, student activities, two successful things about the lesson, one or two suggestions for improvement and general comments. In the reflection section, Student teachers report on the teaching method and questioning techniques used, what the students did and how they were graded, how much time the teacher and students spent, and make general comments.

In the second part, lesson plan form *with* self-evaluation form*,* student prepare a lesson plan following a given format and then evaluate their lesson using guidelines which include one successful thing about the lesson, one suggestion for improvement and reflection on the achievement of objectives; the balance between teacher and student activity; the teaching/learning method chosen; the most successful activity and the reason; timing/place of the lesson and effectiveness; advantages and the purpose of assessment techniques used.

In the third part, the annual lesson plan evaluation form, student teachers collect an annual or unit plan from the cooperating teachers and evaluate it using a twelve-item checklist on a five-point scale. The portfolios are collections of answers to the given stimuli in the classroom observation report form, the lesson plan form with self-evaluation form and the annual lesson plan evaluation form. They do not include any

artefacts progressively structured around important pedagogy concepts, with explanations or conceptual structure. They also show education as an eclectic collection of distinct and generic abilities, attitudes and actions. They do not require student teachers to include a philosophical statement or a quotation that reflects their opinions about language acquisition, teaching, education, or artefacts under each theory, part or theme. The portfolios lack student learning journals or diaries, frequently used in college settings to promote reflection deepen personal understanding and foster critical thinking. This is especially true in the field of teacher education, where reflection has grown to be widely acknowledged as an essential component in the professional development of teachers. This is not the case in this study's reviewed student teachers' portfolios.

Portfolio oral presentation has six specified areas of competence for assessment. In each case, the trainees' performance is assessed against a checklist having four options ranging from poor to excellent (See Appendix O). For instance, one of the six areas of the assessment is stated as 'reflection and analysis'. In the context of time pressure, however, one could hardly treat this crucial area of practicum because reflection necessitates a reasonable amount of time to debate, discuss and share ideas.

5.4.3.4   *Review of practicum guidelines document*

This section discusses the standards outlined in the practicum implementation guidelines for elementary schools. To provide findings on teaching practicum at the Hossana College of Teacher Education, Ethiopia, the Primary School Practicum guideline (2011) was utilised to analyse the procedures for implementing the practicum programme. This study thoroughly researched the practicum's definition, vision, goal, objectives, solid educational principles and minimal requirements for pre-service teacher preparation programmes. Additionally, the document was evaluated in terms of practicum time and structure. In addition, the document specifies the duties of the college practicum coordinator, partner schools, teacher educators, cooperating teachers and practicum student teachers. The guidelines

also explain how schools and institutions that train teachers can work together and what those partnerships look like.

i)   Reviews of the relevant content in the practicum guideline document

This sub-section in Table 5.2 outlines the content review of the practicum guideline document.

Table 5.5: Content review of the practicum guideline document

Domains	Elaboration
A) Vision	The design and implementation of the primary school practicum programme should be directed by the country's broad visions, missions, and standards of the teacher education programme. The primary school practicum programme wants to see primary school teachers who are ready to learn for the rest of their lives, who are dedicated to their jobs, and who can teach children how to be good citizens.
B) Mission	• The primary school practicum programme seeks to train primary school teachers with the necessary academic knowledge, significant professional abilities, good citizenship, attitudes, and skills. • In the primary school practicum programme, ideas and practices for teaching and learning that are reflective and socially pragmatic are pushed.
C) Objectives	• Give trainees the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to be good primary school teachers; • Help trainees become reflective practitioners who can analyse, evaluate and take action to improve their practice and gain more professional knowledge and skills; • Help trainees understand what it means to be a professional teacher, what their responsibilities are and what professional values and ethical practices they should follow; • Learners' research skills should be developed to help them better understand their practice and make informed decisions. • Assist teacher candidates in acquiring the knowledge and skills required to meet the requirements and competencies established by the Ministry of Education.
D) Pre-service Qualification Standards for	Here are the standards set by the Ministry of Education, for a qualified primary school teacher. They are grouped under five themes. In the guideline document, each standard is explicitly

Domains	Elaboration
Primary School Teachers	described by several specific indicators. For this study, only the summaries of the indicators are indicated here. • Make it easier for students to learn; • Identify areas for improvement in student instruction and learning by evaluating their progress; • Participate in continuous professional development; • Become familiar with educational policy and techniques and participate in the development of curriculum and other programmes; • Establish and maintain a relationship with the school community.
E) Sound Educational Principles	Suppose the practicum is to impact the culture of education and how students, teachers, and college supervisors view teaching and learning. In that case, it must be based on effective principles in changing classroom practices and fostering students' growth in knowledge and character. The actual design and implementation of the practicum must take into account the principles, and all actions of school teachers, student teachers, college supervisors, regional education heads, responsible people at the Ministry of Education, and education faculty deans must be in line with the principles mentioned in Chapter two of this study.
F) The Nature and Characteristics of the Partnership between schools and TEI'S	Schools are vital partners in training teachers. Some of the teacher training must take place at schools. This has excellent reasons. As a result, collaboration between the school and the teacher training institution should naturally arise owing to shared objectives and both the college and the school should be focused on bridging the theoretical and practical divides to build stronger ties between the two so that they can benefit from each other's efforts.
G) The College Practicum Coordinator's Roles	The TEI Practicum Coordinator is the link between the TEI and the school and is responsible for: Organising the placement of student teachers in the school each semester, in consultation with the member of staff in charge of the student teachers at the school: • Monitoring the school experience on behalf of the TEI, ensuring that the student teachers gained the appropriate expertise and had sufficient opportunities to develop satisfactorily into professional teachers. • Visiting the student teachers to observe their teaching and discuss their progress; • providing a written report after consulting with the class teacher and the person responsible for student teachers in the school;

Domains	Elaboration
	• Ensuring that the final assessment document on each student teacher's practicum is compiled in collaboration with the school staff and the student teacher at the end of the practicum; • Organising meetings and/or workshops to strengthen the links between schools involved in the practicum and the TEI and to improve practice.
H) Partner Schools' Roles	• Work with the TEI to develop a schedule that ensures each student obtains the necessary amount of actual school experience and exposure to all appropriate grade levels and courses. • Provide each student with an academic mentor for the duration of the school year by assigning a teacher to act as a sounding board for questions and concerns. • Ensure that student-teachers are exposed to all facets of the learning environment.
I) Teacher Educators' Roles	• Prepare student-teachers for the realities of teaching in a classroom. • They supervise, assess and actively assist student teachers throughout the course. • Evaluate students' progress in light of each cycle's commitments. • Provide written and oral responses within a single day following an observation • Organise supervisory conferences with the student teacher and mentor at least twice during the practicum. This has to be done to promote students' learning and be conducted as planned in the middle and end of the practicum.
J) The Functions of School Mentors	• Set some time for the student teacher to review and discuss their work. Every week, at least one hour should be spent talking with pupils. • While watching student teachers teach, provide feedback and constructive criticism. • Give feedback on the student teacher's abilities to recognise the needs of their students; begin, develop, and end lessons; manage transitions and behaviour; use appropriate resources for learning; employ appropriate teaching and learning strategies; communicate and interact with students; and create strong working relationships with them; to support effective learning; and evaluate their teaching.

Domains	Elaboration
K) Student Teachers' Roles	• Participate in all lessons that involve actual instruction as well as supervision meetings. • Participate in peer reflection sessions led by the mentor at the school. • Engage in all activities at school. • Where appropriate, take an active role in the lessons (helping to plan lessons, working with small groups, taking sections of the lesson, etc.). • Assimilate helpful criticism and feedback, and utilise it to improve their instruction. • Consider what they have discovered. • Comply with the school's rules and regulations while acting and behaving correctly.

(Source: The primary school Practicum guideline document, 2011)

ii) Practicum duration and organisation

The first challenge in implementing the practicum programme was the organisation and duration of practicum courses. I reviewed the available documents to produce the information needed to facilitate the practicum courses. In this case, the practicum guidelines document was scrutinised to consider the practicum in terms of duration and organisation. Thus, the role of the practicum in any teacher education programme will depend on the structure of the practicum that embraces different activities and objectives. The Practicum Guidelines state the expected roles, duties, and responsibilities of the college practicum unit, teacher educators, student teachers, school mentors, and partner schools. In addition to describing the roles, duties and responsibilities of the practicum participants, the guidelines include a course description, course objectives, contents, methodological strategies and assessment techniques that are based on constructivist teacher education frameworks.

The Ministry of Education seems to have a strong sense of ownership of the programme in preparing a detailed practicum catalogue. The following table indicates the duration and organisation of practicum courses.

Table 5.6: Duration and organisation of practicum courses

Course Code	Course Title	Naming	Time of delivery	Credit Hours
Prac. 201	Practicum I	School observation	First year 2nd semester	4
Prac. 202	Practicum II	Working under the mentor	Second year 2nd semester	3
Prac. 301	Practicum III	Assisting the mentor	Third year 1st semester	3
Prac. 302	Practicum IV	Actual teaching	Third year 2nd semester	4
Total credits				**14**

(Source: Adopted from MOE, 2011:9)

According to the guidelines or catalogue, the modality for practicum is an integrated way (given side-by-side with courses). It comprises four sub-components: school observation; working under the mentor; assisting the mentor; and independent teaching. These four courses, accounting for 14 credit hours, constitute the practicum component that student teachers are expected to take in the primary teacher education programme. The courses are delivered in four semesters, beginning with the first year.

The college implements the practicum as indicated above. However, the actual implementation of the practicum programme has faced numerous problems, according to the data collected in the research process from all key participants in the research. The college has a budget shortage to cover per diem for the tutors (college supervisors) and student teachers. During Practicum IV, the college academic vice-dean reported that student teachers stay at school for more extended days (45–60 days). As the academic vice-dean reported in Practicum IV, student teachers are expected to do more demanding tasks. They substitute for the classroom teacher and engage in teaching and give quizzes. They require some additional days as compared to the other practicum courses.

However, teacher educators and practicum coordinators in the college identified issues with how the practicum is set up. Because of transport facility problems, students were placed in schools around the college which resulted in short sessions for each student teacher. Because of the crowded placement in those schools, they

could not serve their advisees to the best level suggested. The fourth course (Independent Teaching) was as short as the teaching practice experience in the previous programme.

The academic vice-dean of the college also reported that the practicum structure was disorganised, and much time was spent on school visits, resulting in student teachers' poor knowledge of the subject matter courses. Indeed, one significant structural flow reported in the practicum was that students went to schools for the practicum before taking subject methodology courses. The academic vice-dean also noted that *"because of the curriculum structure, students took subject method courses after they took two practicum courses in their second year"*.

iii) Key players' views on the practicum guidelines and their utilisation

Regarding practicum guidelines and their utilisation, teacher educators in the college reported that the practicum guidelines failed to be adequately implemented due to various conceptual and structural problems although there is clarity about what students are expected to do across multiple practicum components.

However, student teachers in the college mentioned that they do not have access to the practicum guidelines. A student teacher, Molito, reported:

> *"We hear about the routine tasks from our seniors, and we compile the documents using previous tasks. There is a one-day orientation, but that does not give clear direction on what we are expected to do. We did not also meet the instructors assigned to the components. They will tell us what we need to do, and then we will submit the tasks. We don't meet them in class. So, we are not clear. I also met my supervisor when he came to observe me in the school. Our seniors tell us the practicum is difficult. They tell us about the good teachers and those who are hard. So, I thought it would be challenging, but I think I did well "(*MA, interviewed on August 16, 2021).

School directors and cooperating teachers were also asked about the roles they were expected to play. In all interview discussions, cooperating teachers indicated

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they did not know their roles in the practicum as they had not participated in training to mentor student teachers. No cooperating teacher knew that there were rules, and the school directors said that all they knew was that it was up to the schools to train student teachers.

School principals further reported that, except for the brief orientation given by the college, they do not have written guidelines about their roles and responsibilities. Some mentors said they did not know how many practicum sessions the student teachers were to complete. With this backdrop, cooperating teachers were asked how they could help student teachers without understanding the objectives of the practicum and their expected roles. Most of the cooperating teachers affirmed that they try to help the student teachers just by depending on their own experience and the checklists that the student teachers bring to them. A cooperating teacher, Mesekerem stated:

> *"Except for a half-day orientation on the responsibilities we are expected to assume when working with student teachers, we don't know about the guidelines in the practicum. The supervisor and the director gave us the orientation. So, it informed us that we had to train the student teachers but nothing on what we do and how we do things. When students come to our schools, we assist them in various roles. Many teachers do not feel that preparing student teachers is their responsibility. This is because we don't know about the guidelines. There is no clarity. We help the students on a common-sense basis"* (MM, interviewed on July 16, 2021).

The magnitude of the problem can be shown by the following quote from another cooperating teacher, Dejene:

> *"We had to observe and work with students primarily to help them develop professionally, but we do control what student teachers do in our classes because we do not want to see our students miss (lose) things. We were not expected to do anything, either. We had no communication with the college. No one told us what we should do. We simply tried to help them in the way we*

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thought was right. I don't know whether my advice or support is correct or not" (DA, Interviewed on July 12, 2021).

The director of a primary school, Ersame, who has been serving for many years as a school mentor for the student teachers, also mentioned that, except for the directive sent by the regional education bureau, the school had not developed a strategy in collaboration with the teacher education college to effectively implement the practicum. She reported:

> *"We have not worked out how we shall conduct the practicum. We had a workshop on the practicum organised by the college. But I do not know what my responsibilities are except arranging the necessary conditions when the student teachers come. We do not know what student teachers are expected to develop. When they come and request us to provide any information, we do that"* (EH, Interviewed on August 04, 2021).

In general, the practicum guidelines are limited to the level of student-teachers, placement school principals and mentors. Four modules are prepared to implement each practicum component at the college level. Each module has objectives and expected outcomes, but they are all accessible to teacher educators only.

The interviews in the field study in the placement schools also clearly revealed that a one-day orientation is usually given to school principals and school-based practicum coordinators a week before the student teachers go to the schools. Schools have complained that this orientation is neither sufficient nor involves all those in need, such as mentors. In college, there is also a tendency to shorten the duration of the practicum to give more time for the course. There is also no systematic intention to link campus courses with the practicum.

5.5   DATA INTERPRETATION

This section discusses the study findings reported in the preceding section. I present the data interpretation per theme, ending with a synthesis based on the research

aim, as indicated below. Therefore, it is important for me, as the researcher, to explain how the data were interpreted (Aldridge, 2018:246).

5.5.1 Beliefs in Fundamental Assumptions and Principles

The term "beliefs" has a broad definition that encompasses a variety of concepts, including attitudes, value judgments, ideologies, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, dispositions, implicit theories, explicit theories, internal mental processes, action plans, rules of behavior, and viewpoints (Pajares, 1992). In the context of education, one's convictions, philosophies, tenets, or attitudes toward instructing and learning are referred to as beliefs (Haney et al., 2003). According to Jääskelä, Häkkinen, and Rasku-Puttonen (2017) and Kim et al. (2013), "teacher beliefs" can also refer to a broad range of beliefs about knowledge, learning, and teaching, as well as an examination of these concepts from a particular point of view. Examples of such beliefs include pedagogical ideologies, values, and attitudes about instructional strategies.

Therefore, the findings reveal that there are many common ideas (low levels of beliefs) about the theories, principles and basic assumptions of constructivist theory of learning. Firstly, the findings revealed cooperating teachers' diminished roles in the programme as co-educators (Borko & Mayfield, 1995). They did not participate in helping student teachers with their portfolio and assessment practices, nor were they seen presenting challenges and support to help student teachers deconstruct their prior beliefs and reconstruct new meanings in any teaching conferences. In the practicum programme, the only thing they did to help student teachers was give them some material and let them observe their classes while teaching.

The findings confirm that their diminished roles can be related to the fact that they were not empowered to take responsibility and assume their additional roles. The lack of training or induction sessions to assist cooperating teachers in re-conceptualising the process of learning to teach from a constructivist pedagogical perspective can be related to the fact that they were not empowered to take on the responsibility and assume their new roles (Borko & Mayfield, 1995). Because of their

lack of conceptual clarity about the programme's principles and assumptions, their participation as co-educators may have been hampered by briefing sessions. That means the cooperating teachers, who had the lowest level of beliefs, show that they are involved in the programme without explicit knowledge of its principles and basic assumptions (Cobb, 1988:87). Since many researchers have shown that our thoughts always affect what we do, it is clear that the contributions of these cooperating teachers are shaped by their beliefs and the traditional way of teaching what they know and trust.

In addition, the student teachers' lower level of beliefs suggests that, even though they have been through the programme for three years, they still cannot understand how constructivist pedagogy works (Goh and Matthew, 2011). This means that those people who want to become teachers have not changed their ideas about teaching and learning enough. These results show, and the literature generally backs this up, that teacher candidates who do not question their own beliefs may keep doing things the same way they have always been done (Moore, 2003).

On the other hand, though the study's findings indicated that the teacher educators had strong beliefs about the principles, theories and fundamental assumptions of constructivist pedagogy, their actual practices have not been found to support their claims. As shown by the programme's tasks, the right way to do programme activities like portfolios and reflective dialogue was not in line with what the teacher educators said they believed about the principles and theories (Zeichner, 2010). The content of student teachers' portfolios and their process, for example, were not consistent with the fundamental assumptions that brought them into effect in the programme. The idea that the basic assumptions of the reflective approach are true is at odds with the fact that the teaching conferences did not help student teachers engage in as many reflective conversations as expected (Camburn, & Han, 2017; Mathew et al., 2017).

Secondly, the proposed strong school-college partnership is not in evidence. The findings indicate that the existing school-college partnership has remained unchanged in the sense that it is, in effect, for the benefit of the teacher education

colleges to create practice opportunities for their student teachers (Halasz, 2016). This weak or ineffective school-college partnership can also be related to the belief that the practicum is primarily for practice opportunities, as it is valid for an applied science model in which the traditional theory-practice divide prevails (Hartley, Woods & Pill, 2005). These results show that both the people who put policies into action and the people who make those policies have problems with how they think about the world.

In addition, the emphasis on general pedagogical knowledge over pedagogical content knowledge in the field-based experiences of student teachers, such as the content of the school reports, the evaluation checklist and the portfolios, does not support the espoused strong beliefs of teacher educators (Holins, E. 2011). Such inconsistencies are probably a sign of problems with theoretical and conceptual awareness (Roofe, C. G., & Miller, P. 2013), since all of these findings show that the implementers' deep-seated beliefs affect what they do in the programme.

5.5.2   Goal-Setting Beliefs

The findings show that the cooperating teachers are not aware of the goal of the pre-service practicum programme in any way. Their placement as cooperating teachers in the programme without any training or induction confirms not only their unpreparedness but also the conceptual problem of policymakers and teacher education programme owners, who seem to assume that any schoolteacher can act effectively as a mentor (Aladejana, Aladejana & Ehindero, 2006; Ambrosetti, & Dekkers, 2010; Ambrosetti, Knight & Dekkers, 2014; Hobson, Ashby, Malderez & Tomlinson, 2009; Walkington, 2005). This may appear as if one expects to reap what one has not sown. In other words, this tends to attempt to de-professionalise teacher education, which views both leanings to teach and teaching as simple. This, in turn, shows that they do not know enough about educational theories and are not clear on the main goals of the programme.

The finding also revealed that the teacher educators' claimed awareness of the programme's goals was to produce well-educated, competent and reflective

practitioners. However, they pointed out three contextual factors which included a large number of student teachers, the poor academic backgrounds of candidates and an increase of workload that made it challenging to do the programme activities effectively and achieve the goals (Ambrosetti & John, 2010). It seems that some complain about the contextual factors and failure of programmes rather than contributing their part to finding the solutions to their problems. If they are asked for solutions to the issues, their most likely answer is a return to old practices, with which they are confident in and familiar.

The fact that the programme is being implemented in an environment that does not support all the means to the end indicates that most of the activities are kept in programmatic terms (as a programme component) rather than pedagogical or developmental terms (as a component of professional development) (Darge, 2001; Dewey, 1933; Jusoh, Z. 2013). The greatest worry about the management of the practicum programme, leaving aside the main task (how the student teachers could benefit from the programme), could be an indicator of weaker beliefs about the programme's goals.

If the portfolios are not required to include personal philosophies or theories of teaching or subject-specific issues in the practicum evaluation checklist and the traditional supervisor-dominated teaching conferences have not become part of their plan as teacher educators to produce reflective practitioners, the question then arises: What other primary concern could they have on their agenda if they are not committed to this goal?

The actual practices such as portfolio construction and reflective dialogue during teaching conferences seem to have been turned into the applied science model. This shows that they do not know enough about educational theories and do not understand the main goals of the programme. Many educators realise that reflection can be added to any model of teacher education to make it more up-to-date, thus, the pre-service practicum programme is a longstanding practice that has been modified to align with a contemporary model emphasizing ongoing integration of theoretical and practical elements within a course as well as enhanced

communication and cooperation between colleges and schools (Kapur, R. 2018; Yan, C. & He, C., 2010). These changes aim to enhance the professional growth of student teachers during their teaching practicum.

In addition, general pedagogical knowledge seems to pre-dominate the practicum courses, as observed in the evaluation checklist and the portfolios. This seems to come from the conceptual problems of the teacher educators, who may not have a strong, enough conceptual orientation to resist the dominance of the pedagogical science educators, or from their lack of interest or motivation to take responsibility and tailor the practicum experiences to subject-specific issues (Roofe, C. G., & Miller, P. 2013).

5.5.3   Tasks and Activities in Pre-Service Practicum

The findings show that the tasks in the practicum courses have issues in terms of transparency, consistency, integration of theory and practice and organisation. The task of putting together a portfolio, for example, seems to be more of a programmatic than a developmental or pedagogical one, since what the student teachers did during the process is not adequate to show their professional growth in terms of articulating their beliefs and ideas and making the implicit explicit.

The absence of teaching conferences between cooperating teachers and student teachers and the supervisor-dominated discussions between teacher educators and student teachers are indicators of incongruence between the programme practices and the underlying assumptions and goals. In addition, the external transparency and organisation of all of the tasks, in the sense that the programme has set aside time and space for them even though they are poorly managed, and the fact that student teachers are clearly told to do these tasks to encourage reflection even though they are done in an inconsistent and inefficient way, suggest that the programme is more about words than actions.

To sum up, the existing extended practicum experience has been criticised for not being as fruitful as the amount of attention given to it, primarily because the related activities like portfolio and dialogic reflection in the teaching conferences have been

seen as peripheral to the central work of teaching practice. All of the debates about reducing the weight of the practicum appear to stem from this misunderstanding.

5.5.4   Participants' Roles

The findings indicate that the practicum activities, at least theoretically, supported opportunities for student teachers' roles in the knowledge construction process regarding reflectivity. Regarding reflectivity, the portfolio format created opportunities for student teachers' reflection on their classroom observations, their teaching and the teaching conferences on the general process of their projects and teaching, respectively. However, the content of the reflection is limited in scope and quality.

The absence of conferences (both pre- and post-teaching) between cooperating teachers and student teachers, and the supervisor-dominated post-teaching meetings, seemed to have impacted the process of knowledge construction through learners' exposure to cognitive conflicts. In turn, this changed the roles that teacher educators, cooperating teachers and student teachers were expected to take on.

The findings also showed that cooperating teachers had a minimal role in the programme, even though both the practicum guidelines document and the literature insist on their indispensable roles (Borko & Mayfield, 1995). The results also revealed that, contrary to constructivism, the classroom teachers acted as cooperating teachers with no preparation for the role other than classroom teaching. The college, however, frequently suggested that the schools were not working with student teachers effectively. The following facts appear to support this criticism: the placement of student teachers in schools is done on the premise that every classroom teacher can properly supervise student teachers. The college supervisors seemed to think that the main job of the school mentors was to help the student teachers. Colleges cannot use their expertise in teacher education to help classroom teachers work better with student teachers by directing their efforts toward developing experiences for cooperating teachers and encouraging a willingness to assist students with knowledge and skills that will help teachers' better guide students.

Theoretically, it is believed that school-college collaboration or partnership is meant for mutual benefits. Other than the partnership's intended benefits for student teachers, cooperating teachers and their schools are expected to benefit from it. Real school-college partnerships are likely to affect the professional growth of teacher educators. This is because they will have more opportunities to think about their teaching while working with student teachers, immersing themselves in literature and talking with other teacher educators.

However, this has not materialised in our context as long as the college has not created the opportunities for the cooperating teachers to be empowered to the required level to have both the knowledge base and the confidence to assist the student teachers in their professional development actively. The difference between theory and practice seems to be exacerbated by this situation.

The situation of the current partnership has been observed to be essentially a partnership of institutions, not people, a situation into which the participants were being forced by administrative decree. The obvious problems with the partnership can be traced back to a lack of educational ideas. The current school-college partnership is used as a forced structure for curriculum reform, which leads to 'contrived collegiality' because the cooperating teachers do not get anything out of the programme (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990).

In many teacher education programmes, supervisors at the college watch the practicum, but the mentors at the schools are in charge. In contrast, what has been seen in the practicum setting is that teacher educators have taken on more responsibility in the process of preparing teachers because they are seen as more important (Borko & Mayfield, 1995).

5.5.5 Issues and Challenges of Practical Implementation

From all findings reported and discussed thus far, it is possible to conclude that the programme implementation has been heavily affected by mainly theoretical and conceptual problems in the implementation process. It might be good to discuss how

this major factor manifests in the implementation problems. These problems can be attributed to various possible factors that are interrelated to each other.

5.5.5.1   *No attempt is made to address the role of beliefs in the learning process*

Vygotsky says that a child's cognitive growth is a direct result of social interactions and guided learning within the zone of proximal development. This is because children and their peers build knowledge together. When the actual practicum experiences are examined from a cognitive psychology perspective on how vital student teaching is and how its potential can be realised, the tasks and the practical activities have not yet taken any constructivist shape (Fosnot, 1996; Yilmaz, 2008). Based on what cognitive psychologists say about how beliefs affect how we think, act and learn, the practicum programme activities have not helped student teachers reflect on and change their belief systems.

5.5.5.2   *Not recognising the role of collaboration in the process of learning to teach*

Suppose one agrees with Vygotsky's contention from 1978 that thinking originates on a social plane before it becomes internalized. In that situation, cooperation can offer peer-to-peer learning opportunities, social support for reflection, and a foundation for communication between the learner and "more knowledgeable others" (MKO). This is one of the guiding concepts of Vygotsky's work, and it refers to a person who is more proficient than the learner in a given task, process, or idea. When defending one's ideas in a group, like in peer group discussions or teaching conferences with a college supervisor or a cooperating teacher, one is more likely to think about the reasons and principles behind their beliefs.

This means that when the collaborative aspects of the tasks in the practicum programme are investigated through this critical lens, the social nature is not evident in most of the programme tasks. Analysis of the data showed that working with peers and more experienced colleagues had not helped them understand how to teach better.

5.5.5.3 Inadequate structure and focus on reflection

The identification of an appropriate knowledge base as a starting point for helping student teachers first understand concepts of reflection and then apply them, especially the more demanding forms, to their teaching may also account for the significant difficulty observed in the reflective reports. There seemed to be risks in asking people to reflect without teaching them anything, while the literature focused on the fact that student teachers need help, direction and support.

It is prudent for teacher educators to determine the content and quality of reflection when teaching pre-service teachers to develop reflective habits of mind. In a constructivist perspective, student teachers explore their beliefs and knowledge, often with the guidance of the 'more knowledgeable other' (MKO), that is, a college supervisor and a cooperating teacher in school-based experiences, with the intent of helping them to analyse their own experiences so that they may become aware of their contextual knowledge and their practical reasoning about classroom situations (Goh & Matthews, 2011; Richards, Richards & Farrell, 2005).

Data collected from third-year student-teachers' practicum reflections revealed that most of the reflections indicated frustration, shyness and lack of preparation for the activities. It seems that because practicum experiences do not have carefully structured reflective tasks for critical analysis, student teachers are unable to develop their own ideas, theories or philosophies.

5.5.5.4 Viewing the practicum as merely a practice opportunity

The strategies for helping student teachers develop reflective skills and habits were not always employed. It seems that teacher educators did not see activities such as reflective dialogue, portfolio development and reflective peer groups as necessary in developing the ability of learning to teach by doing it in the classroom.

5.5.5.5   *An excellent seed for infertile soil*

The data collected in the research process indicated that in the context of such an assessment, students might develop a surface approach to learning rather than a deep approach in which learners construct their meaning and understanding (Khillar, 2020). This is because the quality of our students' understanding is closely related to the quality of their engagement in the learning tasks. This is, in turn, influenced by the learner's characteristics and the learning context that is created. Students' experiences with the curricula, teaching methods and assessment procedures create the context for learning. The quality of what the students learn can be improved by making changes to the curricula, how it is taught and how it is assessed.

Teachers are change agents who are directly involved in implementing curriculum reforms and ensuring their success or failure. Hence, the research outcomes show that best practicum practice is unlikely to fulfil its promises in the hands of poorly committed or unmotivated teachers. In addition, the practicum guidelines document suggests that the assessment is the responsibility of the mentors and tutors throughout the three years. The data collected revealed that teacher educators' roles were limited to evaluating completed work rather than assessing trainees' overall growth through the practicum. In this way, assessment was not understood and used correctly.

Unlike the traditional model, assessment requires students to write essays, solve open-ended problems, communicate the reasons for their answers, report their findings, and so forth. Such an assessment demonstrates that higher-order thinking is addressed rather than memorising facts. This is possible when the teacher facilitates the learning process (Haigh & Ell, 2014). Teacher-educators are expected to undertake this approach to assessment but rarely utilise it. In this case, a significant gap was witnessed by inexperienced teachers. Therefore, the fate of assessment practice and reflection, which are important parts of the practicum in this research process, seem to have been good seeds planted in soil that was not ready to nurture them.

All these factors are directly related to the problem of theoretical and conceptual clarity in the programme. The people who designed the programme seem to have assumed that everyone in it, especially the teacher educators, cooperating teachers and experts in the Ministry of Education, would have a clear idea of what the modern rhetoric about teacher education means.

5.6   SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter explored the experiences of key practicum participants and presented the findings emerging from data gathered to meet the research goals that guided the study. In this research process, data were collected using semi-structured interviews, observations, document review and field notes to better understand the pre-service practicum at a teacher education college in light of the assumptions and philosophical underpinnings of the constructivist theory of learning. Data analysis employing all data collection instruments yielded responses that painted a picture of how key participants evaluated their practicum experience in light of the constructivist theory of learning. I wanted to learn more about how the practicum is practised and implemented. The results of the data analysis and interpretation revealed that much work remains to be done to inform the development of a constructivist teacher education framework to assist future teachers in their areas of weakness. Therefore, much needs to be done in this area to educate teacher trainees for both the act of teaching and the preparation that occurs in light of the constructivist theory of learning even before a lesson is presented, since it is crucial that the practicum gives pre-service teachers the chance to combine their understanding of pedagogy with classroom context. The main finding was that the basic assumptions of the constructivist theory of learning and pedagogy did not match up with how the practicum was actually used. As a result, there were gaps between the claims and reality. The final chapter summarises the process of the research by providing the significant findings.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1   INTRODUCTION

As I stated in Chapter 1, the main aim of this study was to analyse the current status of the pre-service practicum programme in light of the basic assumptions and goals of the constructivist theory of learning. This qualitative case study research seeks to discover and develop an understanding of how key players in the implementation process perceive and practice the ongoing practicum (Ngara & Ngwarai, 2013:126-135).This entails what has been going on in the college and placement schools in terms of how they see, organise and run the pre-service practicum implementation programme in light of constructivist teacher education frameworks.

To this end, I used Vygotskian's (1978) social constructivist theoretical framework to gather and analyse data to examine the content, tasks, and roles in light of the programme's fundamental philosophical goals. These frameworks provide a direction for practice and establish a framework for the pre-service practicum implementation process to investigate the implementation of the pre-service practicum programme in the teacher education colleges. Thus, from a social constructivist point of view on teacher education, theoretical frameworks were found and grouped into four main areas: assumptions, goals, tasks, and roles. This is important for the regulation of pre-service practicum programmes (Beyhan & Köksal, 2013; Vygotsky, 1978).

It also aimed to shed light on the challenges that contributed to the incongruence between the practicum programme practices and the constructivist assumptions and goals of the programme. Problems related to the experiences of college teacher educators, college deans, college practicum coordinators, student-teachers (trainees), placement school mentors, and school principals about the relevance, goals, and purposes of the practicum programme were looked at (Geletu & Mekonnen, 2019:40–43; Panigrani, 2013:23–28; Tadesse, 2014:97–98). It was also determined if constructivist teacher education frameworks were useful for pre-service training, how

pre-service trainees are supported and guided during the pre-service practicum, and how conducive the learning context (environment) is to promoting the trainees' active engagement with the learning tasks in light of constructivist teacher education frameworks during the pre-service practicum programme (Abdal-Haqq, 1999; Gordon, 2008).

To this end, substantial attempts have been made to identify, describe, and analyse the data presented in the preceding chapters. In light of this, the final chapter gives an overview of the most important results of the whole study and then draws a conclusion based on these results. Finally, possible implications for policy, theory, and practice for future research are provided.

6.2 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this section, I discuss the most important findings in relation to the purpose of the study, the literature on pre-service practicum (in particular), and teacher education in general. This section also gives an overview of the research results and focuses on the most important theoretical and empirical findings.

6.2.1 Key Scholarly Review Findings

Policy efforts to improve the quality of teachers in Ethiopia have been underway since the new education and training policy, introduced in 1994, up to the 2018 new education development road map. In line with this, Ethiopian teacher education has been experiencing dramatic and swift changes, with pre-service teacher education programmes for all school levels witnessing structural and conceptual differences.

Since the introduction of TESO, practicums, or students' field experiences, have received considerable attention in Ethiopian pre-service teacher education programmes (MOE, 2018:3–4). Previously, student teaching was mainly limited to one or two weeks of teaching practice (2 or 3 credit hours) at the end of teacher education programmes. There was no reflective practice, and mentors were not really involved in student teachers' learning. The pre-service practicum programme document says that when a paradigm shift happens, that is, a move to the constructivist theory of knowledge, we

see things from a different point of view as we focus on other parts of the phenomenon (Geletu & Mekonnen, 2019:41–42; MOE, 2011:2-3).

Understanding this as crucial, the education sector has undergone a series of successive education sector development programs. The country's National Education Policy Documents were reviewed in order to synthesize expectations for teachers and teacher education in general. All policy documents about teacher education, like the education policy, the TESO Framework for Action, the TESO Handbook, the TDP Blueprint, the Education road map, and minimum standards for teacher education, were reviewed and directions were made for teacher education in the practicum in particular (MOE, 2018:3–4).

The education policy identified teacher education as one of the priority areas of educational reform. As a result, teacher education programs implemented both curricular and structural changes. One of the most noticeable changes to the teacher education programme was the extended period of the practicum and the different parts it was supposed to cover in various stages (Ahmed, 2013: 5–12; Muhammed et al., 2014: 27–28).

In this research, I examined the tasks and roles of the pre-service practicum participants in light of the basic constructivist theory of philosophical underpinnings and goals of the programme, which is thought to provide a basis for the activities and goals of the programme (Beyhan & Köksal, 2013; Vygotsky, 1968; 1978). In addition, I critically reviewed several research studies on the teacher education programme. More importantly, this study has reflected on the experiences of different countries in terms of school mentors, college supervisors, and student teachers. In this venture, the professional attributes and skills of mentors and college supervisors have been identified. Through a critical analysis of these studies, this research sums up the roles of the different partners in training teachers, as well as the professional qualities and skills of mentors and college supervisors, the organisation of supervisory conferences, and other related issues, and ties them into the lessons learned (Endeley, 2014:147–160; Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005:289–302).

6.2.2 Key Empirical Findings

This study aimed to determine the current status of practicum implementation in the pre-service practicum programme at Hossana College of Teacher Education in light of the fundamental assumptions of the constructivist theory of learning by involving multiple stakeholders. College deans, practicum coordinators, teacher educators, student teachers, school principals, and placement teachers were involved in the study. Interviews, observations, document analysis, and field surveys were used to collect empirical data.

In the sections that follow, I summarize the main empirical findings of the study based on the analysis of the data.

6.2.2.1 Findings concerning the first sub-research question of the study

To investigate key stakeholders perceptions and experiences of the purposes and practices of pre-service practicum aligned to the intentions of constructivist theory of learning in the teacher education programme.

In spite of its inherent problems manifested during implementation, practicum is of paramount importance to developing competent professionals. But the findings from this research indicate, for several reasons, that the practice of the practicum is disjointed and does not align with the intentions of the constructivist teacher education frameworks. Although the training introduced educational ideas and techniques that have been innovative in the teacher education discourse in Ethiopia, it still operates under traditional conceptualisations of the practices of the practicum and the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders (Geletu & Mekonnen, 2019:40–51; Muhammed et al., 2014:27–28; Panigrani, 2013:23–28; Tadesse, 2014:97–110). In support of this, the results revealed that the participants' claimed beliefs regarding the fundamental presumptions and theoretical foundations of constructivist theory of learning regarding the actual programme practices did not match what was stated and have been found inconsistent with the espoused beliefs.

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As a result, practicum practices and beliefs vary widely. The absence of discourse about the practicum and the quickly uncovered assumption that "the practicum is done after theories are mastered" indicated that much remains to be done to integrate a broader understanding and changes in practicum practice (Mazo, 2015:297–298).

In the same vein, the results revealed that both the college tutor and the school mentor had a low level of knowledge, skill, and understanding in developing student-teachers' constructivist-informed abilities, reflective practices, and attitudes. In light of the constructivist teacher education paradigm, their participation in the practicum programme's activities was deemed insufficient. This might be due to a lack of effort on the part of the college and placement schools, excessive workloads, a lack of follow-up and supervision of student teachers on the part of teacher educators and placement school mentors, a lack of preparation for cooperating teachers in light of the constructivist framework for teacher education, and a lack of collaboration between the programme's participants (Beck & Kosnik, 2000: 207–224; Gujjar, Naoreen, Saifi, & Bajwa, 2010: 339–361). This case study also showed that the traditional roles of college supervisors remained the same even in the modern practicum setting and that the roles of cooperating teachers were nonexistent.

The same is true of how student teachers view the practicum programme's contribution to developing their pedagogical abilities and subject-matter expertise. The practicum programme's role in fostering student teachers' reflective practices and abilities is not well perceived in line with the constructivist theory of learning. Most student teachers said that the practicum programme did little to advance their subject matter and pedagogical understanding or familiarise them with the school culture. Many student teachers claimed they had not gained a lot from their practicum experiences.

Student teachers more explicitly claimed that their practicum experiences did not enhance their capacity to prepare lesson plans, create locally appropriate teaching materials, or manage their classrooms. In addition, they claimed that the practicum opportunities had not allowed them to try out various teaching methods in a real-world setting. The student teachers also said that the practicum programme did not help them

connect theory and practice in a real-world educational setting or boost their confidence as teachers (Endeley, 2014:11).

6.2.2.2 Findings about the second sub-research question of the study

To find out how the pre-service trainees at Hosana Primary Teacher Education College are being supported and guided during the pre-service practicum programme on the basis of constructivist theory of learning.

Mention must be made of the student teachers' support. Even though the literature on the roles and responsibilities of the triad is not the same in different teacher education programmes, effective programmes include supervisory conferences, seminars, presentations, and reflections. College supervisors typically carry the mission and values of teacher education programmes, whereas mentors and student teachers construct and reconstruct the science of teaching through various forums (Beck & Kosnik, 2002:86; Nguyen, 2009:655–662). A lack of adequate supervision, mentorship, and peer support for pre-service teachers was found in the study. Students were paired up with an in-service teacher mentor as soon as they arrived at the field school. Pre-service teachers seemed to benefit from this arrangement since they would have access to a wide range of mentors, supervisors, and peers. This, however, was not the reality.

The study revealed that college supervisors neither meet the mentors in schools nor organise seminars for the student teachers to reflect on their independent teaching. Their roles were strictly limited to correcting assignments and observing students for one or two days to determine the students' grades. Student teachers also reported no collegial relationship between them and the college supervisors. The student teachers view the supervisors as assessors of their competence rather than support providers. Student teachers generally made it clear that they had learned almost nothing from college supervisors. Darling-Hammond et al. (2005: 390-441) said that the effects of field experiences depend on how the student teachers are supported and given feedback.

Some student teachers reported that mentors tried to provide educational and emotional support. There were cases in which a mentor added a peer-observation element to the practicum by involving student teachers assigned to work with them. Student teachers reported receiving emotional support to help them gain confidence in their teaching duties and dealing with school students. In contrast to such a scenario, there were mentors from whom the student teachers could learn little due to differences in the conceptualization of teaching activities, which left the student teachers with full teaching responsibility and a lack of willingness to support student teachers. It could be said that the provision of support and feedback was alien to the practicum. As a result, the collected data indicated that the practicum support system, the reflective dialogue during teaching conferences, and the teaching portfolio assembly experiences were not implemented satisfactorily. The data indicated that the tasks in the practical activities had problems being clear and consistent in bringing theory and practice together and being organised.

The results also showed that there was a lack of consistent communication between teacher education colleges and placement schools; the orientation and duties given to student teachers at different schools were different; the supervision was mostly focused on assessment, with directives and evaluative parts, the cooperating teachers were not ready to give the expected help, and some were not supportive, and the primary focus of the supervision was on assessment.

6.2.2.3 Findings concerning the third sub-research question of the study

To investigate how a constructivist teacher education framework can promote teacher trainees' active engagement with learning tasks during the pre-service practicum program at Hossana College of Teacher Education,

Research in teacher education indicates that the practicum's primary purpose is not simply to test theories learned in education courses in their school practices. A practicum is expected to serve as a platform for building school learning communities (Lave & Wenger, 2016; Zeichner, 1992). This necessitates a collaborative partnership being developed between teacher education institutions and schools. In recent literature, this partnership is characterised as the "professional development

partnership," entailing that knowledge is constructed among the triads and teachers, pre-service and in-service, enhancing their professional learning in schools. As the study's findings indicated, not only is the practicum in Ethiopian schools characterised by a one-dimensional partnership, but it also lacks a common understanding of shared purposes, roles, and responsibilities. Mentors in schools do not know what the purpose of the practicum is or what their roles are supposed to be. They also do not know how mentoring skills are usually taught. The current school-college partnership is also used as a forced structure for curriculum reform, which leads to "contrived collegiality" because the cooperating teachers do not get anything out of the programme (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990).

As a result, the interaction between the student teachers and mentors can also be best described as an apprenticeship model, since emphasis is given to transmitting the skills of the experienced teachers to the student teachers. Priority is given to the ordinary skills of planning, managing the class, and so on. This is not to say these teaching routines are not necessary. Instead, it indicates that reflection and other components of the practicum are alien to the training. Student teachers' thoughts (reflections) were full of frustration, shyness, and little preparation for the activities. Because teaching is regarded as an applied science, less emphasis has been placed on developing students' ability to reflect on their teaching practices in practicum. Even this part has been unsuccessful because the mentors do not realize that they need to own the training because they do not have any mentoring skills and, in addition, they have a large number of students to help.

The context can liberate or constrain what we do, since practice is context-related. In other words, contexts can influence the trainees' approach to learning. Similarly, the information gathered pointed to some of the problems in the learning context that hinder student learning, such as large student-teacher ratios, inadequate school facilities, a lack of clear understanding and commitment among its participants, a lack of systematic assessment, and a lack of strong links between the college and placement schools. In addition, not having enough funding, not getting enough help, having students who do not listen, not having strict supervision and follow-up, and not working well with schools are the most stressful things about setting up practicum programmes (Fekede, 2009;

Mignot, 2009). The overall context of learning was less supportive of facilitating trainees' engagement in the learning tasks.

Given this, it is safe to say that the ideas and practices of the practicum did not get transferred to schools or student teachers, which is what was supposed to happen in the constructivist framework for teacher education.

6.2.2.4 Findings about the fourth sub-research question of the study

To find out the challenges preventing the tasks and participants' roles from matching up with the assumptions and goals of the constructivist theory of learning in the pre-service practicum at Hosana Primary Teacher Education College.

According to the literature on practicum evaluation, student teachers should receive continual feedback and be evaluated continuously, with input serving as the engine's lubricant and assessment operating as the gear (Brooker et al., 1998:5–24; Manzar-Abbas & Lu, 2013b:37–52). Here, feedback is used to improve the student-teacher's work and link the assessment with instruction. Although tutors and mentors are expected to assess students on a continuous basis, they do not evaluate student teachers on a continuous basis. They only focus on final (summative) assessments and letter grading. The findings indicate that school mentors and tutors did not work together to assess students during the practicum to maintain impartiality and fairness. As a result, there is a more significant problem with the evaluation and grade.

Another significant problem was the lack of proper evaluation standards and sporadic college monitoring, the lack of cooperation between practicum stakeholders, the fact that many student teachers were assigned to one mentor, and the fact that the schools did not have enough space for student teachers.

The people who participated in the study also talked about other problems that make it hard to use the practicum programme with the constructivist teacher education framework. It was found that tutors and mentors were not committed to making the programme work. This led to problems like tutors and mentors not doing their jobs well, students not being put into practicum programmes in their subject areas, and student

teachers not being paid enough (50 Birr per day) for their time in the programme's practicums.

The preparation of student teachers in line with the constructivist theory of learning falls short of the promised ideas of the practicum. Many reasons exist for this. Misconceptions of the practicum ideas, an inability to forge true partnerships (Zeichner, 2010), a lack of conceptual basis for using portfolios, not enough of a link between what students learned in class and what they did in the teaching classroom (Vick, 2006), the observed teaching conferences not producing data that confirmed reflective dialogues between the supervisor and student-teachers as well as the non-existence of pre or post teaching conferences between cooperating teachers and student-teachers, the roles and responsibilities of participants having not changed as much as the constructivist framework of the programme required them to assume (Allen & Peach, 2007; Cherian, 2007), and the absence of a proper owner of the practicum have been mentioned as significant problems.

To sum up, the evidence gathered from the various stakeholders indicates that the practicum ideas and practices are poorly implemented. Hence, the Hossana College of Teacher Education practicum was challenging to implement because of several problems. As a result, the college was unable to reach its goal of developing and using a constructivist theory of learning in the pre-service practicum programme. Therefore, the following conclusions are drawn based on these results and observations.

6.3 RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

The main research question of this study was: *How does the Hossana College of Teacher Education put the basic ideas of the constructivist theory of learning into practice in the pre-service practicum programme?*

Therefore, based on the investigation, analysis, and interpretation of the data gathered through interviews, observations, document analysis, and field visits, the following conclusions can be drawn as answers to the main research question of this study:

6.3.1 Relating Theory and Practice

The practicum is conceived as a means of relating theory and practice and practices some of the teaching skills required in the daily activities of teachers (Gursoy, 2013; Jush, 2013; Trent, 2010). Most participants believed that student teachers develop theoretical knowledge in teacher education courses, and the practicum is the means to test this knowledge acquired in a teacher education programme. This is similar to the apprenticeship model of a teacher education programme. Concerns are also raised in the literature about connecting theory and practice, and the practicum is pointed out as being especially hard in this way (Allsopp et al., 2006; Bloomfield, Taylor, and Maxwell, 2004; Cochran-Smith, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Goodnough et al. 2016; Korthagen, 2007; Vick, 2006).

Evidence of the issues raised by this research is associated with the gap between theory and practice in pre-service teacher education (Hartley et al., 2005). This, however, contradicts the very essence of reflection, where both practice and theory are expected to interact dialectically and student teachers are expected to reflect on their own and their mentors' practices in schools. Moreover, this view of the purpose of the practicum would lead to the development of a theory-practice divide between schools and teacher education institutions. Hence, it can be concluded that respondents view the practicum as a forum for testing theory and developing some teaching skills, which contradicts its overall purpose. To this, add the fact that mentors had an unclear view of the purpose of the various components of the practicum. Subsequently, it seems like the purpose of the practicum is either not fully understood or different from what it was meant to do, which is to help teachers learn constructively.

6.3.2 The Established Value System

The collected data revealed no substantial influence of the established value systems on the teacher educators', placement teachers', and student teachers' ways of acting and behaving during the practicum programme. Since value systems are believed to be very powerful in guiding actions and decisions and tend to be profoundly altered at a deficient level, the effectiveness of the practicum, which depends on a complete paradigm shift, is questioned. This means that teacher educators and cooperating

teachers, who are supposed to be working toward the same goal, do not seem to agree (to hold shared beliefs) on the programme's basic assumptions and goals in order to make the ongoing pre-service practicum programme work.

6.3.3 Collaboration between teacher education institutions and schools

Collaboration between teacher education institutions and schools *can be highly unproductive, uni-dimensional, disjointed, and lacking in shared purposes. The college has attempted to enhance the involved* parties' engagement in the implementation process. However, dependable collaboration had not yet been established. In other words, all concerned bodies did not adequately share the roles and responsibilities. It seemed that a kind of compliance dominated the scene of the practicum rather than collaboration. All respondents indicated that the practicum is usually poorly organised, and various stakeholders do not know their expected roles. Teacher education institutions and schools do not have a common understanding of the role of each. The roles of the pre-service practicum programme participants have not changed in line with constructivist epistemology, which addresses the roles of beliefs, collaboration, structure, and guidance in the learning process. The deans and school directors have confirmed that there is no joint planning for the practicum implementation. Teacher educators and deans also indicated that they could not thoroughly engage in the practicum because of teaching loads and routines. The Regional Education Bureau's and district education offices' involvement in supporting teacher education institutes and schools in implementing the practicum is minimal. As a result, practically speaking, the practicum appears to be lacking in merit and worth.

6.3.4 Feedback from Cooperating Teachers

Support comes mainly from cooperating teachers, whose view of the practicum is superficial as there was no training on the purpose and various components. It is possible to argue that the practicum serves primarily as an opportunity for students to acclimate to the demands of teaching rather than as a robust learning environment. Here, mention must be made of some of the cooperating teachers whose efforts and commitment have, to a very small degree, made a difference in students' field experiences. It is possible to say that learning from the practicum was a function of the

quality of the cooperating teachers and student teachers working with them (Agudo, J., D.,M. 2016; Jusoh, 2013; Papieva, 2006; Pinder, 2008; Vick, 2006). This is because the cooperating teachers' contributions and involvement in the practicum were all but none. As a result, the practicum in its current form is almost dyadic.

6.3.5 The Relationship between Practicum Activities and Constructivist Theories, Assumptions, and Goals

There is a major inconsistency between the practicum activities and their assumptions and goals. Though attempts have been made to include those features of the constructivist paradigm, the actual practices are not shaped by the constructivist conceptions. The activities or the tasks have not fully developed upon the basic principles, theories, and assumptions of constructivist pedagogy and the overall goals underlying the pre-service practicum programme (Geletu & Mekonnen, 2019:40–51; Panigrani, 2013:23–28; Tadesse, 2014:97–110). There is thus a mismatch between how the basic assumptions of the constructivist theory of learning are meant to be used and how they are used in the practicum.

6.3.6 An Environment Conducive to Learning

The environment was explained in terms of the availability of resources, facilities, and financial support. Context can liberate or constrain what we do since practice is context-related. In other words, context can influence the trainees' approach to learning. The overall learning environment was less supportive of trainees' engagement in learning tasks. This means that regardless of the other courses, which are not the focus of this study, the practicum, which encourages the deep approach to learning where learners construct their meaning and understanding, is seldom practiced at the college and cooperating schools. Instead, a surface approach to learning seems to dominate (Khillar, 2020).

6.3.7 The practicum relies on the student-teacher's ability to reflect on the practice.

Reflection appears alien to the practicum due to a lack of proper understanding, poor organisation of the reflection process, and student teachers' lack of capacity to manage the intended tasks. Student teachers were not given the appropriate support and institutional setup to reflect on their practices. A reflection on practice is mainly done to complete a set of items that student teachers copied from previous years' work. The enormous conceptual problem on behalf of the practicum programme implementers is mainly responsible for the deficiency in employing the suggested psycho-pedagogical strategies to promote student teachers' reflective skills in the extended practicum experiences. This is attributable to the fact that the aims of the activities were not conceptualised as the problems evident in the school-college partnership, supervisory styles employed in student teaching, the content of the student teaching portfolio, and reflection. Accordingly, there is no institutional way for student teachers, mentors, and teacher educators to reflect, which seems to be a need that is either not met at all or only partially met in teacher education institutions.

6.3.8 Practicum is only seen as a part of the Teacher Education Programme

Neither of the courses provided in the programme were mentioned as related to practicum. As stated above, because the practicum is viewed as a means of linking theory to practice, theoretical issues in teaching are considered concerns of teacher educators, and the practical involves practicing the skills acquired in the courses. This divide shows that teacher education courses are not integrated with the practicum.

6.3.9 Practicum needs Continuous support, guidance, follow-up, assessment, and feedback

College supervisors visit schools to observe student teachers and give constructive feedback. It is better to assess students' practice before finally grading them. In addition, formal assessment procedures (both formative and summative) must be followed (Haigh & Ell, 2014). However, in reality, the opposite occurred. For various reasons, mentors and tutors do not continuously assess student teachers. They only

focus on final (summative) assessments and letter grading, which means that the assessment of the practicum serves mainly for grading. The portfolio presentation of student teachers was also mainly done or observed under considerable time pressure. There was no access to group debates and discussions from which trainees could learn from one another and their mistakes. In this way, mentors, including tutors, should develop the skills and qualities of critical reflection applied to education.

The study's findings revealed that teacher educators were disadvantaged in this crucial aspect of the practicum as the research partners lacked a proper conception of continuous assessment. The role of school mentors in assessing student teachers was also limited. The school mentors' role in giving marks was inflated, and little difference was evident between student teachers. Moreover, the triadic assessment in this study is non-existent.

To sum up, there was a major mismatch between rhetoric and practice in the implementation process of the pre-service practicum programme. It is thus possible to say that the paradigm shift has not yet occurred. All of the work has gone into using the language of constructivist pedagogy and trying to give names to the traditional practices that the participants know and with which they feel comfortable.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following suggestions are based on the study's findings and conclusions for implications for policy, theory, and practice. Taking the constructivist theory of learning into account, the recommendations are based on the problems that have been found to affect how well pre-service practicum programmes are run in teacher education colleges in Ethiopia. Recommendations are made at two levels, namely the governance level and the institutional level.

6.4.1 Governance level

Recommendation 1: The Curriculum Framework

The National Ministry of Education should develop a pre-service practicum curriculum framework for the teacher education institutions that train primary school teachers

based on the social constructivist theory of learning and the policy premises of the Education Development Road Map, which is currently implemented at the primary level of education, starting in September 2022 (Invarson, L., et al. 2014). In addition, the primary school teaching practicum guideline and checklists needed revisions on the basis of social constructivist theory of learning and the education development road map mentioned above. Also, the Ministry of Education should make a policy document to guide the development of communities of learning and practice (beyond reflection—toward learning communities) (Ambrosetti, Knight & Dekkers 2013; Lave, J. 1991; Lave, J., & Wenger, E. 1998), for the implementation of a pre-service practicum program for institutions that train teachers in primary schools, which is based on a broader professional learning experience in teaching to prepare teachers.

Recommendation 2:- Coordinated efforts should be necessary.

Efforts to address pre-service practicum problems must go beyond quick fixes such as workshops and directives from regional education bureaus and the Ministry of Education. It is important to remember that building up the practices shown in the TESO document or the teacher education program is a process that needs collaborative work and a firm commitment.

Recommendation 3:- Micro-teaching or peer teaching, writing on the board, and asking questions should all be part of teacher education programmes.

Student teachers were reported to lack confidence during student teaching. Although such problems may be solved over time, schools and students said that student teachers lack the basics in the above areas. The Ministry of Education needs to include some of these in the teacher education course and include them as part of the practicum.

Recommendation 4:- Revisiting the per-diem of student teachers

The current per-diem of 50.00 Birr in today's living conditions is entirely unreasonable. Therefore, in consultation with the regional education office, the Ministry of Education should fix a reasonable per diem scale while trainees are in practice.

Recommendation 5:- Giving less weight to things that happen outside of school and more weight to things that happen in the classroom

Although factors outside of the classroom are essential in the teaching and learning process, the presence of a toilet, a fence, the size of the school compound, and so on are all issues that students may encounter. Therefore, the Ministry of Education must include students' characteristics, teachers' practices, assessment practices, curricular matters, and the inclusion of challenging and original activities as requirements for the actions of practicum modules. This is an advantage when students have to complete assignments as a requirement in the practicum course module. It encourages student teachers to become creative and reflective and to avoid copying.

Recommendation 6:- Clear role descriptions for college supervisors, mentors, and student teachers

To carry out the practicum, the schools must desire to do so. Schools must implement a practicum programme following specified guidelines, with the Regional Education Bureau (REB) outlining precise and current practicum standards that spell out the accountability, responsibilities, and tasks of all parties involved in the programme (teacher education colleges, woreda education offices, schools, and school teachers).

6.4.2 Institutional level

Recommendation 7:- Forums for conceptual deliberations

Different forums should be held by the college at various levels for conceptual considerations to help change implementers, develop their level of awareness about the practicum theories, their role, and the purpose of the programme activities, and equip them with conceptual tools to analyse reform movements in light of the constructivist approach to teaching and learning. If this occurs, everyone will be in a position to question the purpose of every component of the programme and firm value systems and convictions will be formed about the programme, and they will have a framework within which to do so.

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Recommendation 8:- Seminars, supervisory conferences, and reflection sessions should be included as part of the practicum

These components should be realistically and clearly designed. Due to the paradigm shift in professional learning over the last few decades, teacher educators must rethink their practices to help student teachers gain professional expertise during the practicum in keeping with the paradigm shift. During the practicum, students should be encouraged to think critically about their practice as teachers. In order for tutors and mentors to create the conceptual framework for reflective thought generally and understand how student teachers might be taught to become reflective practitioners specifically, seminars and workshops concentrating on the practicum run by the college need to be conducted. This means that time must be set aside to watch, discuss, and think about the learners' progress.

Recommendation 9:- Mentor training

Mentors have no training. What they do is allow the students to teach in class and give some feedback. Therefore, school-based mentor training and induction/orientation programmes should be provided by the college (Hossana College of Teacher Education) for practicum participants at the beginning, middle, and end of the programme to create a shared understanding among practicum stakeholders on the objectives of teacher education programmes (Ambrosetti, 2014). The basic ideas and goals of the constructivist theory of learning should be put into practice during the practicum. The performance of the student teachers should be evaluated, and they should be advised on how to help by pointing out their strengths and areas where they could improve.

Recommendation 10:- Empowering school mentors

It is imperative to realise that student teachers spend much time interacting with school mentors. If student teachers are expected to develop the skill of learning to teach, empowered and enlightened mentors are necessary. Mentors need to have a significant say in the assessment and organisation of the student teachers' experiences. To make student teaching a more fruitful experience for practicing students, the college should

conceptualise the role of cooperating teachers in the teacher education programme so that college supervisors use their limited time in schools to help student teachers. Instead of focusing on specific lesson characteristics, the college supervisor should empower school mentors to the required level by demonstrating how to observe student teachers and conduct conferences to concentrate on teaching and learning. They help student teachers become more reflective about their practice. If so, college supervisors can hand over the supervision responsibility to school mentors.

Recommendation 11:- Creating a well-organised unit responsible for the practicum

The practicum appears to be an abandoned component of teacher education programmes, judging by the sheer disorganisation with which it is run, the unethical dimensions it tolerates (copying from previous students is the norm), the laxity demonstrated in its assessment, and the lack of any follow-up and evaluation in its implementation. In teacher education colleges, there needs to be a unit in charge of the practicum that has the right staff and credentials. The one-person staffing in teacher education institutions does not seem to be working. Thus, the college should be responsible for managing the practicum coordination office. The office should have a well-organized and controlled mentorship system that makes it easy to ensure the programme is being used correctly and offers an effective solution to the problem.

Recommendation 12:- Setting a reasonable student-teacher ratio

One of the issues preventing tutors and mentors from thoroughly monitoring student-teachers and giving them feedback is the number of student-teachers assigned to each school. Additionally, if a tutor or mentor is responsible for supervising student teachers who are placed in classrooms, the tutor or mentor is wasting their time. The college practicum unit should give each tutor or mentor a manageable number of student teachers based on their busy schedules. This way, they can spend their time observing and helping the student teachers in the best way possible.

Recommendation 13:- Disseminating the objectives of the practicum

As with other educational innovations, the practicum has not yet been implemented in an environment where its goals and components are clearly understood. It is thus up to the college to get the word out about the practicum's goals and create a group of well-informed teacher educators, schools, and student teachers.

Recommendation 14:- Guidelines and structured activities

As long as the pre-service practicum programme subscribes to the constructivist approach, the learning tasks should consider the role of beliefs in thinking, acting, and learning. Through activities like portfolios, which must be carefully guided and structured, the programme should help student teachers think about and change their beliefs.

Recommendation 15:- Relating mentoring to the professional and career development of teachers and incentive packages

Given that the core of school-based mentoring in pre-service teacher education is sharing professional knowledge and experience with student teachers, placement teachers who serve as mentors should possess the requisite knowledge and experience. Mentorship should not be based simply on a teacher's years of experience. Mentorship has to become part of the professional structure of teachers. Only those who are willing to support student teachers and who are professionally committed will be given the opportunity. Partner schools and colleges should establish criteria for the selection of school mentors. It is advisable to select mentors who are more skilled and effective. Correspondingly, incentive packages for mentors have to be considered. The incentive package could include reducing the number of classes a teacher has to teach, considering promotion a requirement, and giving the teacher more chances to lead and learn.

Recommendation 16:- The optimal assessment and monitoring interval

Pre-service teachers, mentor teachers, and supervisors should all contribute to the evaluation process (triadic assessment), with everyone who has a stake in the

practicum agreeing to participate. The evaluation and comments from supervisors can aid pre-service teachers in having a well-rounded reflection. Thus, a triadic assessment congruent with this objective is warranted. Three potential factors can affect the outcome of a triadic assessment: the supervisor, the mentor teacher, and the pre-service teacher. A balanced evaluation requires input from all relevant parties.

The findings indicated that most tutors and mentors saw their mentees twice, and many student teachers were only monitored once. A non-continuous method of evaluating student teachers' performance looks unjust and goes against the goals of the practicum. Therefore, rather than mentors and tutors monitoring and assessing each other individually, they should work together to do so. By putting all of their grades and comments together, they can compare notes on the progress of the student-teachers and stop arguing about grades and comments.

Additionally, establishing clear and specific assessment criteria before the practicum encourages mentor teachers and supervisors to provide pre-service teachers with more specific instructions while giving them a clearer idea of what they should accomplish during their professional development. During the practicum, pre-service teachers can evaluate their performance and progress. The assessment criteria should be decided before the practicum, and all parties should have a clear understanding. Only then will the standard achieve its goal.

Recommendation 17:- Sincere collaboration

To improve the situation of the current partnership, schools and colleges that train teachers should form close ties. Having regular meetings and conversations about their shared responsibilities should be a priority. The college is intended to provide some material and intellectual support to their school partners to develop their partnership, which aids student teachers in their school-based training. The college should also recognise the roles of placement teachers and give them professional power by offering short-term training to equip them with the relevant knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions.

Recommendation 18:- Sharing of experiences

Instead of providing the student teachers with consistent results, placement teachers (mentors) should correctly and consistently support, observe, and evaluate them. They should then deliver the results that are appropriate for their performance. In addition to sharing their own experiences, public school principals and teachers should be open to hearing about those of college teachers and student teachers.

Recommendation 19:- Further reading and practice

Student teachers are strongly advised to refrain from plagiarising other people's work and turning it in as their own. Further reading, practice, and experience sharing with colleagues might help them better understand their subject matter and language challenges. During the different parts of the practicum programme, student teachers should follow the professional code of ethics, which includes wearing the right clothes, being neat and tidy, and keeping track of time.

6.5 AVENUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As yet, only a minimal amount of research has been done on the topic of practicum implementation in Ethiopia. Therefore, there is still much work to be done in the future. Increasing the quality of teacher preparation is currently the most crucial issue facing higher education institutions. As a result, educational research results should be a wake-up call to help institutions understand the current state of teacher education and what is expected of it.

Producing qualified and skilled human resources who strive for innovation and suggest ways to improve the process is the ultimate goal of examining the current status of the implementation of the practicum programme in light of the constructivist teacher education framework at a teacher education college. Findings from this kind of research may be useful for policymakers, researchers, curriculum developers, and others.

However, the small sample size used in this research may not represent all teacher education practicum programmes across the region and the country, and the generalisability of my findings to others should be cautioned. Therefore, the implication

of this research's findings is the participants' reaction to the challenges and prospects of the implementation of the practicum programme. In this case, the practicum is a blend of resistance and responsiveness which necessitates immediate intervention to correct the already established belief and value system.

Among the others, for instance, the need for a recent paradigm shift in teacher education should be open for discussion in such a way as to challenge and alter the beliefs and values inherent to the traditional model of education because our beliefs and values determine what we do and the kind of teacher we are. I believe the desired professional commitment and devotion are sandwiched between our thoughts and value systems. As a result, my research has revealed several concerns that need further empirical inquiry.

This study does not account for all of the complexities that can arise during practicum implementation; therefore, it would be helpful to hear from participants in future studies. Hence, the study's exploratory nature allowed for the identification of both promising and problematic avenues for further research. As a result, more research could be done to see if similar patterns in how practicums are used in other colleges that train teachers.

Therefore, I think this study should be replicated in other settings, with other teacher education colleges, participants, and maybe even more scenes, to learn more about how teachers learn in teaching practicums. In addition, more research should be done to examine the content of theoretical courses and the effects of context on how the practicum programme is implemented.

6.6 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS STUDY TO THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

Concerning the contribution of my study, given what I know about the profession, what I learned from my literature research, and what I gleaned from my data analysis, I believe my study adds significantly to the body of knowledge, particularly in the pre-service practicum. Moreover, my research provides data that might be used to support the proposed changes to Ethiopia's teacher education in the field of pre-service practicum. I also think my work contributes significantly to the field of research methodology, as

details were given on how I did my study, how I got the data, and how I analysed it. Additionally, research of this kind is intended to inform policy and curriculum revisions at the level of the Ministry of Education to train primary school teachers at teacher education colleges with new insights into how to best equip future teachers for the challenges they face in the classroom.

6.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The qualitative case study approach used in this study is better suited for investigating and elucidating the issue discovered by the researcher, as well as addressing the research issues rose. But, it is essential to recognise the limitations of this study. To the degree that there is a lack of available local research, the analysis and recommendations for improvement of practicums are not comprehensive. As a result, the researcher was compelled to rely more on outside sources of information. Another problem is that I could not access or use these resources, even though I knew about modern tools for organising and analysing qualitative data, like ATLAS.ti and similar programmes.

Furthermore, due to the geographically distributed samples (student-teachers and school mentors) across several schools, management and data collection challenges were presented. Since this study was only done at Hossana College of Teacher Education and its partner schools, the results may not be generalisable to other settings.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected researchers, students, and academics globally. The same is true for my research activities. Some of the participants were not willing to participate in the individual interviews because of their fear of the COVID-19 pandemic. Accessing data collection through telephonic individual interviews or using other modern technologies like zoom and others has been a personal challenge. Therefore, during fieldwork to conduct face-to-face interviews, I ensured that COVID-19 lockdown protocols were followed, which mandated that all participants wore masks, adhered to social distancing and all participants were sanitised, washed their hands and measured their temperature. The other problem that I faced was the problem of funding for the

research process relying on a bursary which has not materialised. As a self-sponsored student in this programme, I faced many challenges.

6.8 A PROPOSED PRE-SERVICE PRACTIUM FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHER EDUCATION BASED ON THE CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY OF LEARNING

This section of the thesis presents the proposed framework for pre-service practicum implementation based on the constructivist theory of learning for teacher education at a teacher education college. The findings, theories, educational strategies, and recommendations made by study participants all contributed to the development of the framework. The study identified the deficiencies in the implementation of the existing pre-service practicum programme by focusing on the researcher's perspective of theories in Chapters 2 and 3, as well as drawing on the researcher's experience as a teacher educator and data gathered through interviewing, observing, and document analysis. The findings of this study help us learn more about how practicum is used as part of the pre-service curriculum in Ethiopian teacher education institutions that train teachers for primary schools.

In addition, this study adds to our understanding of how pre-service practicum is used in Ethiopian primary schools and teacher education institutes. Two significant epistemological contributions from the current study include:

1. Ethiopian teacher education policies relating to the pre-service practicum training of students:

The framework's development was informed by current teacher education programmes in Ethiopia that are supported by educational policies. To be more precise, the premises of the constructivist theory of learning, which are clearly indicated in the pre-service primary teachers' practicum guidelines document, were ineffectively executed to train teachers for the primary schools and were in an undetermined position. In addition, this study was founded on the epistemological position that participants are essential to forming and mediating social reality because they bring it into being (Gray, 2004). That means the study's

epistemological stance relies on the premises that social reality is created by the people who engage in it (Mertens, 2005:12).

2. Factors that have an effect on pre-service practicums in teacher education programmes:

The purpose of the following framework (Figure 6.1) is to serve as a roadmap for the introduction of pre-service practicum courses at teacher education colleges in teacher training. The primary objective of the framework is to provide a roadmap for implementing the pre-service practicum programme in accordance with the most up-to-date theories and policies. In order to meet the rapidly expanding demands of today's classrooms, it is essential that teacher education programmes in the 21st century reflect the most recent developments in pedagogy around the world. Putting reflective practice front and center, it plays a crucial role in ensuring that both student teachers and teacher educators have the tools they need to succeed in the field.
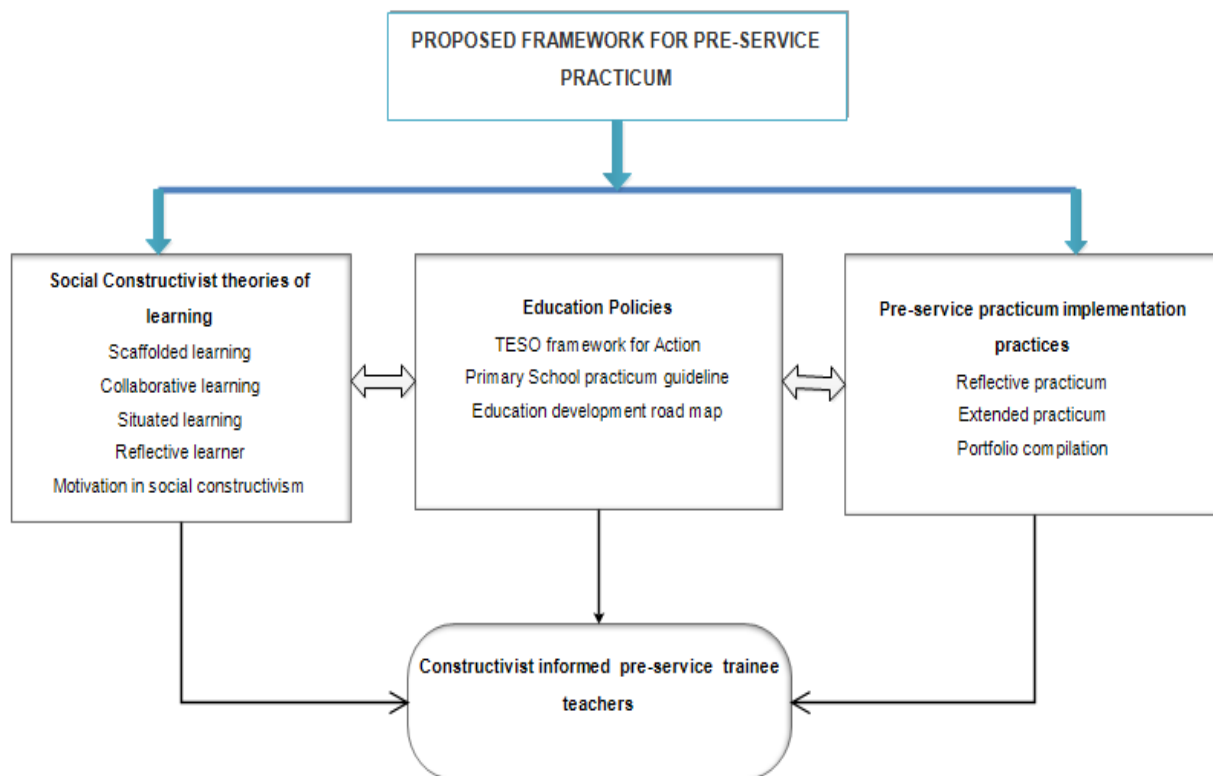
(Source: Desta, 2022)

Figure 6.1: Proposed framework for pre-service practicum in teacher education

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The proposed framework (Figure 6.1) above illustrates the pre-service practicum programme's component hierarchy. This research confirms the challenges associated with introducing pre-service practicum programmes in teacher education colleges that prepare teachers. The framework also emphasises on theory, policy, and practice as three primary components crucial to the incorporation of practicum within the teacher education programme. The framework's supporting theories deal with fundamental matters like creating a conducive environment for practice and education. The framework emphasises the importance of social constructivism's foundational elements, namely collaborative learning, situated learning, reflective learning, scaffolded learning, and motivation. Despite the fact that the pre-service practicum programme includes courses on pedagogical, psychological, and methodological theories, students have reported that they found it challenging to put these ideas into practice in their classroom settings. The policies that govern education specify the steps taken and the individuals involved in the pre-service practicum experience.

However, the practice of the practicum is disjointed and does not align with the intentions of constructivist teacher education frameworks. Although the training introduced educational ideas and techniques that have been innovative in the discourse on teacher education in Ethiopia, it still operates under traditional conceptualisations of the purpose of the practicum and the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders. The results revealed that the participants' claimed beliefs regarding the fundamental presumptions and theoretical foundations of constructivist pedagogy and the actual programme practices did not match what was stated and have been found inconsistent with the espoused beliefs.

As a result, practicum practices and beliefs vary widely. What key stakeholders (student teachers, placement teachers, teacher educators, school mentors, and school principals) say about what the practicum is and how it is used, how people make connections between learning and training, and what they think about people's beliefs and problems (challenges) with the practicum, as well as what placement teachers and teacher educators recommend for change, are all very different. The absence of discourse about the practicum and the quickly uncovered assumption that "the

practicum is done after theories are mastered" indicated that much remains to be done to integrate a broader understanding and changes in practicum practice.

Within the research findings of this study, the proposal of a social constructivist theory of learning framework for implementing a pre-service practicum programme is apparent through the empirical and theoretical findings, but in order for TEIs to put this framework into action, key stakeholders should be willing to implant social constructivist theory of learning practices into the curriculum.

Therefore, the next section of the discussion is forwarded as an answer to the question of what learning theories should be recommended to the pre-service practicum programme.

6.8.1 Constructivist Theory of Learning

When the science of psychology initially began to take shape, the behaviourist learning theory emerged as the leading framework (Harasim, 2017:11). To a behaviourist, what matters is what can be seen: people's actions and, more specifically, how to influence or elicit specific kinds of behaviour (Harasim, 2017:33; Schunk, 2014:21). Cognitivist learning theory developed as a reaction to behaviourism. Contrary to behaviourists, cognitive scientists are interested in how one's own thoughts and ideas work, as well as how these ideas might be used to encourage more active learning (Harasim, 2017:49; Schunk, 2014:22). In response to the "mind as computer" approach to learning advocated by cognitivists, psychologist Jean Piaget developed the constructivist theory of learning, which places more emphasis on individual learning than on the social aspects of learning (Selwyn, 2016:80). Students in a constructivist classroom collaborate with their instructor and fellow students to build their understanding of the subject matter. The foundation of the constructivist approach to education is the idea that students learn best when they are actively engaged in a process of discovery (Selwyn, 2016:192). Both social constructivist learning theory and constructionist learning theory can be seen as offshoots of constructivism (Harasim, 2017:70; Selwyn, 2016:83). According to constructionists, knowledge is best gained through hands-on experience; hence, they advocate for students to create functional items as a means of independent exploration. Alternatively, social constructivism places an emphasis on

how meaning and comprehensions emerge from interactions with others (Harasim, 2017:73; Selwyn, 2016:83). The next part of the discussion offers an answer to the quest in developing the proposed framework for this research process: that is, the social constructivist learning theories that are relevant to the pre-service practicum of a teacher education programme.

6.8.1.1 Social Constructivism

The social-constructivist approach was used in this research as the main framework to discover the people involved in the pre-service practicum's practices, beliefs, and "life experiences" (Creswell, 2014:37–38; Patton, 2002b:268). The main characteristics of the relevant social constructivist teaching and learning theories were used to identify the scope of this framework. The key theories for making pre-service practicum work well are all part of the social constructivist theory of learning framework.

The social constructivist theory of learning is the most clear and useful framework for this research. This is because the goal of this study was to look at the roles that student teachers, associate teachers (school mentors), and teacher educators played in implementing practicums, both individually and as a group, as well as the meanings they gave to the practices and experiences of implementation in the context of the practicum triad (Creswell, 2014:37–38).

In view of this, Vygotsky's ideas inspired the social constructivist movement, which places a focus on the role of interaction between people in the development of both meaning and understanding (Selwyn, 2016:83). Meaning is constructed, and knowledge is appropriated through social interaction. Learning is more contextualised because the social component is so important. According to Vygotsky (1978), the development of an individual's own meaning and understanding is a result of mutually advantageous social or group interactions, mostly through cooperation and negotiation. This theory expands on Jean Piaget's concept of the child as a learner who actively constructs knowledge (Verenikina, 2010:17).

Vygotsky's social constructivist learning theory is predicated on the idea that learning is a continuous process that cannot be isolated from other people and their experiences.

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Because of this, a collaborative learning community can be fostered through the use of teaching methods that encourage the sharing of subject matter expertise and in which students work together to research, present, and ultimately create a final project. Student-student and/or expert-student collaboration on real problems or tasks results in knowledge that is built on the language, abilities, and experiences of each participant, which in turn are shaped by their culture (Vygotsky, 1978:102).

Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist learning theory emphasises the importance of a learner's social environment, arguing that knowledge acquisition is a continuous process that cannot be isolated from other people. There are three essential elements of classroom discussion that must be present when social constructivist theory is being implemented:

1. At least one more experienced peer or adult is there, and they know things and have skills that the student does not yet have.
2. Taking part in social activities that give you a chance to see an expert in action and learn new skills.
3. Scaffolding is when a more knowledgeable peer or teacher helps someone learn by giving them extra tasks to do.

It is evident from the discussion above that Vygotsky's theory has important implications for how pre-service practicum programmes are run. In particular, college supervisors and placement school teachers must mentor, support, and inspire student teachers while also helping them learn ways to solve problems that can be used in a number of contexts. As a result, student teachers' practicum experiences need to be reshaped to require the participants' roles to be redefined from constructivist perspectives. Consequently, there needs to be a solid foundation for pre-service practicums as a sort of educational practice. It is based on a number of philosophic and theoretical presumptions, concepts, ideals, and objectives. Assumptions like this underpin everything from how classes are structured to the types of resources students and faculties have access to. Education policy, objectives, and curriculum design are all influenced by these presumptions.

In the next sections, we will talk about the important social constructivist learning ideas for this argument.

1. Scaffolded Learning

In Vygotsky's theory, "good learning" takes place in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZDP) (Vygotsky, 1978:87). In social constructivism, this is a central idea (Hagelia, 2017; Selwyn, 2016). Inspired by Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Development, the scaffolding approach to learning is a social constructivist kind of education. It is a collection of methods designed to help bring the ZPD to life for the student. According to Vygotsky (1978), learning is a culturally and socially conditioned, as well as consciously and methodically regulated, part of the human development process.

The ZDP is the difference between the level of prospective development anticipated through problem-solving under supervision or in partnership with more experienced peers and the level of development currently achieved through independent issue resolution (Verenikina, 2010:17). In order to accomplish this, teachers must provide students with the chance to talk about what they have learned and must encourage collaboration among students of all skill levels. This is accomplished by the educator working in tandem with and encouraging the learner to realize his or her full potential, as developed according to the ZPD theory. As the learner learns more, scaffolds are taken away one by one until the learner is able to do well without help (Harasim, 2017:73–74).

The more capable peer does not necessarily have to be a teacher because the goal of scaffolding is to help the pupils attain a goal, finish a task, or solve an issue. An application with scaffolds or a peer with more advanced expertise could be the source. Teachers use scaffolding to give students context and a reason to be interested in learning new material (Harasim, 2017:73).

2. Collaborative Learning

A small group of students with a variety of talents working collaboratively to solve a problem is what collaborative learning includes (Sullivan, 2009:112). Vygotsky (1978)

also argues that cognitive development is carried out via social interactions. He claims that interactions between pupils and more experienced peers or adults will help the learning process move along more successfully. To guarantee that everyone has understood the subject or idea being discussed, the students must collaborate (Hagelia, 2017: 107). One of constructivism's key methods for teaching and learning is this one (Verenikina, 2010:17). Group interactions, like those found in real-world learning situations, are a key component of knowledge construction (Verenikina, 2010: 17).

It is important to create opportunities for students to learn from and teach one another through teamwork and collaboration. Student confidence and self-esteem are bolstered through collaborative learning, which has been demonstrated to increase not only their ability to think critically but also their ability to think creatively. The more the students collaborate and build their knowledge, the more they feel like they own the subject, and the more confident they become on multiple levels (Center for Teaching and Learning, 2003). Collaboration improves a student's ability to communicate, work in a team, and feel good about them.

3. Situated Learning

Dewey and Vygotsky, proponents of the situated learning pedagogy, argue that pupils are more likely to retain information if they are given meaningful roles in the classroom (Lave & Wenger, 1991:48–49). Situated learning is based on the principle that learning is most effective when it is meaningful, relevant, and involves actual, everyday tasks (Lave & Wenger, 1991:49). From a constructivist perspective, the learning environment must provide the learner with situations in which their own constructive achievements, social interactions, and participation processes are possible, which is why these are referred to as "situated learning environments." Situated learning encompasses, for example, internships and cooperative education, where students take on meaningful roles in solving real-world issues. The term "situated learning" refers to where the students currently find themselves in the context of their education. As students generate or "construct" their knowledge from experiences they bring to the learning setting, it becomes part of the learning activity, its context, and the culture in which the

activity is developed and used (Lave & Wenger, 1991:98). So, social interaction and hands-on activities are important for a good contextual learning experience.

In this study, the practicum was considered a situated activity to capture key participants' perceptions of the institutional, social, and private contexts that influenced the practicum's implementation and experience. By viewing the context of phenomena, I can recommend the constructivist epistemology's emphasis on meaning-making and understanding (Creswell, 2014:37–38; Gray, 2004). Given that the premise of contextual learning is that knowledge is acquired through social contact, the learner assumes the roles of both apprentice and teacher in this context (Lave & Wenger, 1991:29). The teacher's role is that of facilitator and promoter in a classroom where students work together to solve problems and are pushed to the limits of their analytical and physical skills. Social interaction is a critical component of situated learning—learners become involved in a "community of practice" that embodies certain beliefs and behaviours to be acquired.

4. Reflexive Learner

Learning from experience is accomplished through reflection; one does not acquire knowledge directly from experience but rather from contemplation of the experience after the fact (Hagelia, 2017:125). It is thus clear that when we reflect, we are looking back at our deeds. The term "reflexive learner" is used to describe a method of education that emphasizes the importance of preparing students for the realities of the twenty-first century (Emmanuel, 2020). Students need to have the ability to reflect on their own learning in order to succeed in the modern world. A reflexive learner is one who can think critically about what they are learning while it is happening. Critical thinking is another trait of a self-reflective student. Critical thinking includes scientific reasoning, systems thinking, computational thinking, decision making, and problem solving (Qian & Clark, 2016:51).

In the reflective practicum, reflective learning is conceptualised as based on the circularity between action and reflection, including the practice of questioning our own ways of problem solving, and the quality of learning is related to the development of reflective practices. Reflection allows people to think back on and learn from their

experiences, constructing new knowledge and applying that knowledge to new experiences. As such, it's possible to equate the act of reflection with learning itself. Activities are the concrete steps you will take to achieve each learning objective. Tasks include learning about best practices, generating reports, instructing others, analysing data, and assessing initiatives, as examples.

5. Motivation in Social Constructivism

According to the social learning theory, motivation is a process that is socially negotiated and produces observable interest and involvement (Sivan, 1986:210). Social constructivism enables us to talk about the influence of context and culture on motivation (Sivan, 1986:216). Additionally, discussions of motives from a social constructivist viewpoint would emphasise the importance of interpersonal relationships, addressing the problem of the individual student's cognitive and affective requirements (Sivan, 1986:221-222). In order to address students' cognitive and affective requirements within the context of education in the ZPD, Sivan (1986:224) contends that teachers might employ the social constructivist viewpoint to integrate instruction with motivation. Students might be inspired to develop their emotional and cognitive health through scaffolding (Sivan, 1986:226).

According to Sivan, a foundation for the incorporation of motivation into instructional approaches and the development of motivational competence is provided by the nature of the interaction between the learner and the more experienced peer (Sivan, 1986: 226). Since the study of human motivation demands consideration of the individual's innate psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, it follows that educational settings and pedagogical strategies that take these aspects into account will best serve students and result in increased motivation, achievement, and satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 2000:232). Deci and Ryan (2000:236) say that if children don't develop competence, autonomy, and relatedness, it could hurt their motivation, academic performance, and general well-being.

6.8.2 Education Policies Underpinning the Framework

Policies take precedence in directing and governing programmes. This section addresses policies that support teacher education programmes and the pre-service practicum programme in Ethiopia. These educational policies are directives for teacher education and development in the Ethiopian context.

Policy efforts to improve teacher quality in Ethiopia have been ongoing since the introduction of the new Education and Training Policy in 1994, as well as the Education Development Road Map, which has been implemented at the primary level of the country's education system since September 2022. In line with this, Ethiopian teacher education has been experiencing dramatic and swift changes, with pre-service teacher education programmes for all school levels witnessing structural and conceptual differences.

Understanding this as crucial, the education sector has undergone a series of successive education sector development programmes. The country's National Education Policy Documents were reviewed in order to synthesize expectations for teachers and teacher education in general. All policy documents about teacher education, such as the Education Policy, the TESO Framework for Action, the TESO Handbook, the TDP Blueprint, the Minimum Standards for Teacher Education, and the Education Development Road Map, were reviewed, and directions were made for teacher education in particular (MOE, 2018:3–4).

The Education Policy identified teacher education as one of the priority areas of educational reform. Given this, teacher education programmes have carried out both curricular and structural reforms. One of the most noticeable changes to the teacher education programme was the extended period of the practicum with the different parts it was supposed to cover in various stages and the portfolio compilation (Ahmed, 2013:5–12; Geletu & Mekonnen, 2019:41–42; MOE, 2011:2–3; Muhammed et al., 2014:27–28).

Since the introduction of TESO, practicums, or students' field experiences, have received considerable attention in Ethiopian pre-service teacher education programmes

(MOE, 2018:3–4). Previously, student teaching was mainly limited to one or two weeks of teaching practice (2 or 3 credit hours) at the end of teacher education programmes. There was no reflective practice, and mentors were not really involved in student teachers' learning. The pre-service practicum programme document states that when a paradigm shift happens, that is, a move to the constructivist theory of knowledge, things are seen from a different point of view as the focus moves to other parts of the phenomenon (Geletu & Mekonnen, 2019:41–42; MOE, 2011:2-3).

With regard to the approach, TESO favours a reflective practitioner approach and recommends the employment of strategies like portfolio compilation and action research experiences towards the trainees' development as reflective practitioners. Many scholars (e.g., Darling–Hammond, 2006; Fish, 1995; Freeman, 1994; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Prawat, 1992) recommend such an approach from constructivist perspectives in pre-service teacher education programmes. Since the 1980s, most Western countries, to improve the quality of teacher education, have included recommended changes in standards, most notably from this constructivist framework (Van Huizen, Van Oers, & Wubbels, 2005). Their reform efforts were primarily concerned with assumptions about knowledge, learning, and teaching that promote students' deeper understandings of concepts and the relationships among concepts as opposed to memorization of isolated information.

Following TESO, the Ethiopian government has decided to make a teaching practicum an important part of the teacher education program (Ministry of Education, 2011:1). This will help create a group of teachers who can think critically about their work. The notion of the reflective teacher is drawn from the work of Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (2008). As the Ministry of Education (2011) observes, the model for the practicum was previously based on a reduced apprenticeship scheme where student teachers watched, observed, and emulated teachers in the school. This method of teaching preparation is currently viewed as being too narrowly focused and unsuitable for developing the knowledge and abilities those teachers in the twenty-first century will need (Caldwell, 2006). The aim, therefore, has been to pursue the long-term goal of reforming the culture of training rather than applying a "quick fix" response.

As a result, the framework recommends a response that builds a shared understanding, viewed as a social practice, that involves all the major stakeholders in students' field experiences, that is, teacher education institutions, the Ministry of Education, regional education bureaus, teacher educators, schools, and student teachers of the practicum, as a means for developing teachers' *reflexivity*. It could be seen as a social process of negotiation or collaborative sense-making that helps their cognitive development as they interact with different types of reflection content and work with experts and peers (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

The framework also provides the educational scaffolding for student teachers to demonstrate disciplinary and pedagogic competence as well as the development of positive educational relationships. The framework also calls for the development of a primary school practicum curriculum framework and guideline document to guide the development of communities of learning and practice (beyond reflective thinking—toward learning communities) for the implementation of a pre-service practicum program based on social constructivist theory of learning, the policy premises of the Education Development Road Map, as well as on the broader professional learning experience in teaching to prepare teachers to work in primary schools and communities, as is currently advocated (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

6.8.3 Pre-Service Practicum Practices Underpinning the Constructivist Framework

Pre-service teachers can learn the most from constructivist approaches if they are exposed to opportunities for reflective practice and are well mentored by practicum supervisors and cooperating teachers. Supervisors of practicums need to talk to pre-service teachers to learn about the challenges of putting the plan into action, problems with time limits, and other issues.

Essentially, pre-service teachers need guidance on how to make the most of their practicum experiences through reflection. As a result, individuals are able to coordinate their actions with their decisions, comprehend shifting conditions, and respond appropriately (Killen, 2007). However, if they do not evaluate their methods, they may not be able to effectively impart knowledge to their students since they will be unable to

draw connections between their theoretical understanding and their real-world experiences (Braun & Crumpler, 2004). In addition, trainee teachers are urged to reflect on the school observation, reflective learning, peer teaching, independent teaching practice, and portfolio development stages as indicated in the Ethiopian primary school practicum guideline document (MOE, 2011). Consequently, there needs to be a solid foundation for pre-service practicums as a sort of educational practice. It should be founded on a number of assumptions, ideas, values, and goals found in philosophy and theory.

Since it is widely acknowledged in the social sciences that we must critically examine the effects of our guiding beliefs, professional expertise, and behaviours, the idea of reflexivity has gained widespread acceptance. One of the most important goals of a practicum is to instill in new teachers the habit of self-reflection, which is then applied to a broader review of instruction and student outcomes. The learners, the student teacher, the cooperating teachers, and the college supervisors are all essential players in the practicum, which could be likened to an "action research project." The practicum is a chance to put what you have learned into practice by creating a learning activity, analysing its effectiveness, and considering how you could alter your approach to teaching in the future.

Yet, in the context of this research, complaints have been received about trainee teachers' reflective practices, despite the fact that reflecting activities are emphasized in Ethiopia's pre-service practicum programme. There is a disconnect between what is learned in college and what is actually taught in the classroom, and this research's findings point to that gap (Hartley et al., 2005). However, this goes against the spirit of reflection, in which theory and practice are meant to have a dialectical relationship and trainee teachers are tasked with analysing the methods employed by their mentors in the classroom. A theory-practice gap between schools and colleges providing teacher training would also arise if practicums were seen in this light. This prevents student teachers from taking part in introspective practices (Cohen, 1999; MOE, 2003).

Like Schön's (1983, 1987) writings on the reflective practitioner, the development of the teaching practicum coincides with the popularity of constructivism as a philosophical

framework. According to Schön, "theorizing" (the active processing of the consequences of situated learning) is integral to the practice of professional learning and not something that occurs outside of it. In this setting, student teachers build their theories and principles from first-hand experiences, which they then test against established knowledge and beliefs. By reflecting on and making sense of their experiences in the classroom, student teachers might develop the kind of intuitive professional "know-how" to which Schön (1983, 1987) refers. These principles, which currently form the basis of many contemporary teacher education programmes, were originally developed in reaction to the apprentice model of teacher education and are based on the reflective approach. TESO suggests that student teachers use methods like portfolio compilation to foster their growth as reflective practitioners during their practicum experience.

Consequently, the practicum is designed to introduce trainee teachers to schools at an early stage of their training. By connecting what they have learned in the classroom with what they have seen first-hand, they can better apply the principles they have studied in college. Teaching strategies (including curriculum design, implementation, pedagogy, and assessment), child psychology, school structure, and community context are brought to conceptual and practical life for pre-service teachers, teacher educators, and their school mentors. The bonds formed in this way are indicative of a professional network. Therefore, pre-service teachers need to be familiar with the realities of day-to-day teaching and engaged from the outset in the development of integrated learning experiences based on the social constructivist theory, in which pedagogical theory is simultaneously taught, absorbed, and put into practice. As a result, the proposed framework demonstrates features intended to assist pre-service teachers in developing into competent, well-informed, constructivist-informed, and self-reflective practitioners and professionals who can employ the constructivist theory of learning in their classroom instruction.

6.9 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In hindsight, I would say that my doctoral journey and research has been a life-changing experience. There has been a dramatic shift in my attitude toward academic knowledge,

and I believe I am still developing as a critical reader, researcher, and author of educational content. Even with all due respect to the system (and in retrospect, possibly as a result of the culture's emphasis on devotion to most types of seniority), I come from a background where robust thinking was not always well supported (such as age, position at work, or level of education). As a result, I was raised in a highly positivist environment where there was often just one proper solution, one real explanation, or one correct way to solve most problems. I have realised that, in the majority of circumstances, it does depend.

My quest for a more profound knowledge of social, cultural, educational, professional and personal phenomena necessitated using qualitative methods. It was via this research project that I was able to have a better understanding of qualitative research. It has taught me more about many ontologies and epistemologies, especially in the social sciences, and made me more aware of them.

It is safe to say that my research has opened my eyes to a slew of new questions about teacher preparation in general and the practicum in particular. No educational programme is, however, entirely free of problems. For such questions, I am confident that I will keep looking for solutions and contributing to the body of knowledge by doing additional research. I believe that if we want something badly enough and work hard enough, we will usually get it. Our intentionality is at the root of our ability to transform our potential into reality. I say this with a heavy heart, but patience, hope and my doctoral journey have all been good for me and the educational community.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Certificate

UNISA | university of south africa

UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2021/05/12

Dear Mr DB Ageye

Decision: Ethics Approval from 2021/05/12 to 2026/05/12

Ref: **2021/05/12/67135455/16/AM**
Name: Mr DB Ageye
Student No.: 67135455

Researcher(s): Name: Mr DB Ageye
E-mail address: 67135455@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Telephone: +251973455579

Supervisor(s): Name: Prof MM van Wyk
E-mail address: vwykmm@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 0835445217

Title of research:

Pre-Service Practicum at a Teacher Education College: A Case of Ethiopia

Qualification: PhD Curriculum Studies

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2021/05/12 to 2026/05/12.

*The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2021/05/12 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:
1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.

4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.

5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.

6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.

7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.

8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2026/05/12**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number **2021/05/12/67135455/16/AM** *should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,

Prof AT Motlhabane
CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC
motlhat@unisa.ac.za

Prof PM Sebate
EXECUTIVE DEAN
Sebatpm@unisa.ac.za

Approved - decision template – updated 16 Feb 2017

Appendix B: Letter of Consent to UNISA

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The Southern Nations, Nationalities and People
Regional State Education Bureau
Hossana College of Teacher Education
ቁጥር/Ref. No19/1-606/30/35
ቀን/Date 03/03/2021

To:-University of South Africa (UNISA)

College of Education

Department of Curriculum and instructional studies

Pretoria

Subject:: - Giving Letter of Consent

Mr. Desta Bekele Ageye requested our college to get letter of consent from the participants in his research work. The college communicated all Teacher-Educators- to give their permission to participate in the study by explain his research thesis and shown positive response. And the college again permits him to do his thesis on the student-teachers of the college.

Therefore, we would like to inform your institution that Mr. Desta Bekele Ageye to conduct his PhD Project/thesis in our college as well as has got permission from all Teacher-Educators (participants of the research) and college students by giving all the necessary data he needs in the study.

With Best Regards!

በፈቃዱ ገ/ሃና ላምባሞ
Betekadu G/Hanna Lambamo

የኮሌጁ ዲን
Dean of the College

ስልክ ቁጥር : +251 046 555 26 52   ፋክስ: +251 046 555 26 54   ፖ.ሣ.ቁ: 94   ሆሣዕና ኢትዮጵያ
Tel.   +251-046 555 26 54   Fax   +251 046 555 16 70   P.O.Box   Hossana   Ethiopia
           +251 046 555 16 68   መልሱን ሲፃፉልን የኛን ቁጥር ይጥቀሱ
In replying please quote our Ref. No

Appendix C: Letter of Cooperation to Educational Offices

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The Southern Nations, Nationalities and People

Regional State Education Bureau

Hossana College of Teacher Education

ቁፕር/Ref. No 1911 - 1355/19/35

ቀን/Date 06 110 12013

To:

- South Nation Nationalities and Peoples Regional Government Education Bureau
- Hadyia Zone Education Department
- Hossana city Administration Education office
- Lemo Woreda Education office :

Subject: - Request for Mr. Desta Bekele Ageye to conduct Research :

This is to inform you that Mr. Desta Bekele Ageye a lecturer in our college of Education is currently pursuing his PhD Degree in curriculum studies with South African University (UNISA). As a requirement for his study, he needs to conduct a research study on *"PRE-SERVICE PRACTICUM AT A TEACHER EDUCATION COLLEGE: A CASE"IN ETHIOPIA".* Hence we further request your permission to allow him;

- Conduct interviews with principals and Mentor teachers;
- Conduct classroom observation with college trainees and school mentor-teachers in your respective Primary school.

Therefore, we would kindly request your District Education office to allow him the necessary assistance and support in collecting the relevant Educational Policy documents and guidelines in this important research activity.

Your usual cooperation is strongly appreciated.

Yours Sincerely!

C/C

To: - Mr. Desta Bekele Ageye

Hossana College of Teachers Education :

በፈቃዱ ገብረ ሀመሳሞ
Belekadu G/Hanna Lanssamo

የኮሌጁ ዲን
Dean of the College

ስልክ ቁጥር : +251 046 555 26 52   ፋክስ : +251 046 555 26 54   ፖ.ሣ.ቁ : 94   ሆሳዕና ኢትዮጵያ
Tel.   +251-046 555 26 54   Fax   +251 046 555 16 70   P.O.Box   Hossana   Ethiopia
       +251 046 555 16 68   መልስ ሲሰጡ ፈ ል ን የ ች ን ቁጥር ይጥቀሱ
In replying please quote our Ref. No

Appendix D: Letter of Cooperation to Primary Schools

በደቡብ ብሔር ብሔረሰቦችና ህዝቦች
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The Southern Nations, Nationalities and People
Regional State Education Bureau
Hossana College of Teacher Education

ቁጥር/Ref. No 19/1-1354/80/85

ቀን/Date 05/10/2013

To:

- Haile Bubamo Primary School
- Ersa Adada Primary School
- Alemu Wole Hana Primary School
- Bobicho Primary School
- Ambicho Primary School
- Masbira Primary School

Subject: - Request for Mr. Desta Bekele Ageye to conduct Research!

This is to inform you that Mr. Desta Bekele Ageye a lecturer in our college of Education is currently pursuing his PhD Degree in curriculum studies with South African University (UNISA). As a requirement for his study, he needs to conduct a research study on *"PRE-SERVICE PRACTICUM AT A TEACHER EDUCATION COLLEGE: A CASE IN ETHIOPIA"*. Hence we further request your permission to allow him;

- Conduct interviews with principals and Mentor teachers;
- Conduct classroom observation with college trainees and school mentor-teachers in your respective Primary school.

Therefore, we would kindly request your Primary School to allow him the necessary assistance and support in this important research activity.

Your usual cooperation is strongly appreciated.

Yours Sincerely!

C/C

To: - Mr. Desta Bekele Ageye

Hossana College of Teachers Education

Betekadu G/Hanna Lummum
ምስጋና ዴን
Dean of the College

ስልክ ቁጥር: +251 046 555 26 52   ፋክስ: +251 046 555 26 54   ፖ.ሣ.ቁ: 94   ሆሳዕና ኢትዮጵያ
Tel.   +251-046 555 26 54   Fax +251 046 555 16 70   P.O.Box   Hossana   Ethiopia
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In replying please quote our Ref. No

Appendix E: Consent Form

The research is entitled "PRE-SERVICE PRACTICUM AT A TEACHER EDUCATION COLLEGE: A Case in Ethiopia."

College/School: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____ Department: _____ Phone: _____ Interview was conducted by:

Thank you for participating in this study and for your time and thoughts. My name is Desta Bekele Ageye, and I am a doctoral student at the University of South Africa (UNISA). As a teacher educator, I'm interested in how the practicum fits into the framework of constructivist pedagogy and how important it is for students to get hands-on experience.

Therefore, this research is designed to solicit information on the perceptions and understanding of the student teachers, teacher educators, and placement teachers on the practice, implementation, and relevance of the practicum programme based on the constructivist theory of teaching and learning. At present, the idea of a practicum is becoming a hot topic in the universities and colleges of teacher education. Through this research, I also want to understand how the practicum programme is going based on constructivist theory assumptions. I will also try to understand the problem areas. Data will be collected through interviews and discussions with you, observation, and documented analyses.

The information you share with me will be secured as confidentially as possible, and your identity will be kept anonymous. Pseudo-names will be used in case names are needed in the report. There are no known risks or discomfort associated with this study. The expected benefits of this study are the discussion results that may help improve the educational system. I would happily share the findings with you after the research is completed or while in process. I'll say it again: your name will not be linked to the research results in any way, and only I will know that you took part in the study.

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Principles and Procedures for Research

The following framework consists of many ethical principles that guide you in pursuing an agreed-upon and amended framework. Don't be afraid to ask questions about the study before or while you're taking part in it.

1. Participation in the research is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.
2. Information given to me (by yours) will be treated as belonging to you and can be used only with your permission.
3. Observations and interpretations made by me will be treated as belonging to me. You will be asked to weigh their fairness, accuracy, and relevance, whatever is at stake in such comments and interpretations.
4. I will seek your permission to create or use audio recordings. You have the right to refuse, change your mind after being recorded, or withdraw your recordings. You can edit or change them as you are invited to listen to the taped information;
5. I will securely store data.
6. In the case of views that may be revealing, the presentation of these views will be negotiated with you;
7. Your complete anonymity will be maintained, and the confidentiality of the information you share with me will be maintained.
8. Except for professional collaboration in the project, no data from interviews will be disclosed to third parties without your explicit and prior consent. When information is shared for a professional group, these rules and procedures apply to everyone who is part of that group.
9. I'm willing to talk with you about these rules and procedures to come up with a plan for the research and to change them as needed.
10. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have a question, you may contact me via email: desta123b@gmail.com   or by cell phone at 251973455579/251911031721.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in this study!

Desta Bekele Ageye,

Signature
PhD candidate

Statement of consent

I have read and/or heard the consent form and recognise that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during the study without consequence. I understand that my information resulting from this study will be strictly confidential. I realise that I may ask for further details about this study if I wish to do so at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form for my records. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Name _____ Sig. _____ Date _____

Appendix F: Semi-structured Interview Questions for Teacher Educators

1. What is the practicum programme? How do you perceive it? Why do you think the practicum programme is needed?

2. Do you (the tutor), the mentors, and the student teachers all have the same idea of how the programme works?

3. Do you think that mentors, school principals, and the school community have the necessary awareness about the programme? How well aware are cooperating teachers of the nature of the programme?

4. Do you think student teachers get all the necessary preconditions or preparations before they are assigned to the teaching practice?

5. What support do you give the student teachers? How did you encourage your student-teachers to get professional experience as a college tutor?

6. How do you evaluate student teachers' actual practice based on the assumptions and goals of a constructivist teacher education framework? Please, justify your idea by supporting it with concrete examples.

7. How do you prove that the college and placement schools are working together to carry out the activities and goals of a practicum programme? How do you see the school environment for student teachers?

8. In a constructivist framework for teacher education, is there a way to run the practicum programme in the college and placement schools so that the trainees are more likely to actively engage with the learning tasks?

9. What significant challenges do you face as a college tutor?

10. Does the way the practicum is actually done fit with the frameworks for teaching and learning in the TESO programme that are based on constructivism?

11. Suppose your answer is "no" to the question above, what do you think are the significant challenges that face the incongruence between the programme practices and the assumptions and goals of the practicum programme in light of a constructivist teacher education framework?

12. What future improvements do you think will be made to the programme?

Appendix G: Semi-structured Interview Questions for Student Teachers

1. What is the practicum programme? How do you perceive it? Why do you think the programme is needed?

2. How do the placement teachers, administrators, and the school community perceive the programme?

3. Do placement teachers and principals have the necessary awareness of the programme? How?

4. From your pedagogy classes, do you have a general idea of how the constructivist teacher education framework works? If your answer is yes, how do you evaluate it with your practicum experiences?

5. To what extent has your first-year college preparation aided you in your actual practice? Were the necessary preparations done in college?

6. What are the main differences between college training programmes and placement schools?

7. How cooperative or supportive are your practice's placement teachers? What about other concerned bodies?

8. What significant support do you get from your mentors and tutors?

9. What do you feel about the assessments made by mentors and tutors?

10. What significant advantages do you get from the practicum programme?

11. How do you perceive the school environment of the placement schools? Is there an enabling environment to run the practicum properly?

12. What significant challenges do you face as a trainee?

13. What future improvements do you think will be made to the programme?

Thank you in advance!

The Researcher

Semi-structured Interview Questions for Pre-service Teachers, adapted to Amharic language.

አባሪ 3፥ በማስተማር ልምምድ ላይ ላሉ የሶስተኛ ዓመት የኮሌጅ ተማሪዎች የቀረቡ የቃለ መጠይቅ ጥያቄዎች

1. የፕራክቲከም መርሃ ግብር ምንድን ነው? እንዴት ታዩታላችሁ? ፕሮግራሙ ለምን ያስፈልጋል ብለው ያስባሉ?

2. የትም/ቤት ሜንተር መምህራን፥ ርዕሰ-መምህራንና እና የትምህርት ቤቱ ማህበረሰብ ፕሮግራሙን እንዴት ያዩታል?

3. የትም/ቤት ሜንተር መምህራንና ርዕሰ-መምህራን ስለ ፕሮግራሙ አስፈላጊ ግንዛቤ አላቸው ብለው ያምናሉ? እንዴት?

4. ከፔዳጎጂካል ሳይንስ የትምህርት ፅንሰ-ሃሳብ የተነሳ የኮንስትራክቲቪስት የትምህርት ማዕቀፍ እንዴት እንደሚሰራ አጠቃላይ ሀሳብ አለዎት? መልስዎ አዎ ከሆነ፣ ከፕራክቲከም ተግባራዊ ልምዶችዎ እንዴት ይገመጋሙታል?

5. የአንደኛ ዓመት የኮሌጅ የክፍል ውስጥ ትምህርት ዝግጅትዎ በተጨባጭ የፕራክቲከም ልምምድዎ ውስጥ ምን ያህል ረድቶዎታል? በኮሌጅ ውስጥ አስፈላጊው ዝግጅት ተደርጓል ብለው ያምናሉ?

6. በኮሌጁ የስልጠና ፕሮግራሞች እና በአንደኛ ደረጃ ትምህርት ቤቶች መካከል ያሉ ዋና ዋና ልዩነቶች ምንድን ናቸው?

7. የትም/ቤት ሜንተር መምህራን ምን ያህል ተባባሪ ወይም ደጋፊ ናቸው? ሌሎች የሚመለከታቸው አካላትስ?

8. ከኮሌጅ መምህራንና እና ከትም/ቤት ሜንተር መምህራን ምን ጠቃሚ ድጋፍ አግኝተዋል?

9. በኮሌጅ መምህራንና እና በትም/ቤት ሜንተር መምህራን ስለተደረገ ግምገማዎች ብሎም የውጤት አሰጣጥ ምን ይሰማዎታል?

10. ከፕራክቲከም መርሃ ግብር ምን ጠቃሚ ጥቅሞች አግኝተሃል/ሻል?

11. የአንደኛ ደረጃ ትምህርት ቤቶችን የትምህርት ቤት ሁኔታ እንዴት ያዩታል? ልምዱን በትክክል ለማስኬድ የሚያስችል ከባቢ አለ?

12. እንደ ሰልጣኝ ምን ጉልህ ፈተናዎች አጋጥሙዎታል?

13. ወደፊት በፕሮግራሙ ላይ ምን ማሻሻያ ቢደረግ ብለው ያስባሉ?

ከታላቅ ምስጋና ጋር!

ተመራማሪው

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Appendix H: Semi-structured Interview Questions for School Teachers

1. How do you understand (perceive) the practicum programme? Do you have the necessary awareness about the programme?

2. How do you see the partnership between the college and the placement school?

3. What support do you and your school get from college?

4. To what extent are you interested in and committed to mentoring student teachers? What about the principals?

5. Do you have a conceptual understanding of the constructivist teacher education framework? If your answer is yes, how do you evaluate it with the trainees' actual practicum experience?

6. Do student teachers know enough about the subject, how to teach it, how to plan, how to run a classroom, and other things like that?

7. Is there any significant difference in planning, teaching methodology, classroom management, and the like done by student teachers? Why?

8. What were the significant contributions made by the student teachers to you and your school in the practice periods?

9. How did the student teachers feel about the school environment? Is there an enabling environment to run the practicum properly?

10. Do you think that the practicum programme is important? Why?

11. What do you think are the significant problems with the programme? What major issues do you face while working as a mentor? Why?

12. What should be done to implement the practicum programme in the future better?

Many thanks for considering my request.

The Researcher

Semi-structured Interview Questions for school mentors, adapted to Amharic language.

አባሪ 4፡ የቃለ መጠይቅ ጥያቄዎች ለትምህርት ቤት መምህራን (ሜንተርስ)

1. የፕራክቲክ ፕሮግራሙን እንዴት ተረዱት? ስለ ፕሮግራሙ አስፈላጊው ግንዛቤ አልዎት?

2. በኮሌጁ እና በአንደኛ ደረጃ ትምህርት ቤት መካከል ያለውን አጋርነት እንዴት ያዩታል?

3. እርስዎ እና ትምህርት ቤትዎ ከኮሌጁ ምን ድጋፍ ያገኛሉ?

4. የተማሪ መምህራንን ለመምከር እና ለመርዳት ፍላጎትዎ እና ቁርጠኝነትዎ እስከ ምን ድረስ ነው? ስለ ርዕሰ መምህራንስ?

5. ስለ ኮንስትራክቲቪስት የትምህርት ማዕቀፍ ዕንሰ-ሃሳባዊ ግንዛቤ አልዎት? መልስዎ አዎ ከሆነ፣ ከሰልጣኞች የማስተማር ልምምድ አንፃር እንዴት ይገመግሙታል?

6. የተማሪ መምህራን ስለ ርዕሰ ጉዳዮ፣ እንዴት እንደሚያስተምሩ፣ እንዴት ማቀድ እንደሚችሉ፣ ክፍልን እንዴት እንደሚያስተዳድሩ እና ሌሎችም ስለመሳሰሉት ነገሮች በቂ እውቀት አላቸው ብለው ያምናሉ?

7. በትምህርት እቅድ፣ በማስተማር ዘዴ፣ በክፍል አስተዳደር እና በመሳሰሉት በተማሪ መምህራን በሚደረጉት ጉዳዮች ላይ ከፍተኛ ልዩነት አለ ወይ? ለምን?

8. በልምምድ ወቅቶች የተማሪ አስተማሪዎች ለእርስዎ እና ለት/ቤትዎ ያበረከቱት ጉልህ አስተዋፅኦ ምን ነበር?

9. የተማሪ አስተማሪዎች ስለ ትምህርት ቤቱ ከባቢ ምን ተሰማቸው? ልምዱን በትክክል ለማስኬድ የሚያስችል ከባቢ አለ?

10. የፕራክቲከም መርሃ ግብሩ አስፈላጊ ነው ብለው ያስባሉ? ለምን?

11. በፕሮግራሙ ላይ ያሉ ጉልህ ችግሮች ምንድናቸው ብለው ያስባሉ? እንዲ አማካሪ ስትሠራ ምን ዋና ጉዳዮች አጋጥሞዎታል? ለምን?

12. የፕራክቲከም መርሃ ግብሩን በተሻለ ሁኔታ ተግባራዊ ለማድረግ ምን መደረግ አለበት ብለው ያስባሉ?

<div align="right">

ጥያቄዎን ስለተቀበሉኝ በጣም አመሰግናለሁ፡፡

ተመራማሪው

</div>

Appendix I: Semi-Structured Interview Questions For College Practicum Coordinators, College Vice-Deans, and School Principals

1. How do you evaluate the implementation of the practicum programme based on the assumptions and goals of a constructivist teacher education framework? Please, justify your idea by supporting it with concrete examples.

2. How do you monitor and assess the implementation of the practicum programme?

3. How do you check whether student-teachers develop the required skills from the school-based practicum programme or not?

4. How do you feel about the commitment and interest of school mentors and college tutors in giving candidate teachers the help they need?

5. How do you figure out how well the college and placement school work together to carry out the tasks of the practicum programme?

6. How do you evaluate the linkages in creating a conducive environment for student-teachers' actual classroom teaching practice in the placement school?

7. What were the challenges encountered during the implementation of the practicum programme?

8. What should be done to implement the practicum programme in the future better?

I would appreciate any help you can provide.

The Researcher

Semi-structured Interview Questions for school principals, adapted to Amharic language.

አባሪ 5፡ የቃለ መጠይቅ ጥያቄዎች ለትምህርት ቤት ርእሰ መምህራን፤

1. በኮንስትራክቲቪስት የትምህርት ማዕቀፍ ግምቾች እና ግቦች ላይ በመመስረት የፕራክቲከም መርሃ ግብሩን እንዴት ይገመግማሉ? እባኮትን በተጨባጭ ምሳሌዎች በመደገፍ ሃሳብዎን ይግለፁ።።

2. የፕራክቲከም መርሃ ግብሩን እንዴት ይከታተላሉ እና ይገመግማሉ?

3. የተማራ-መምህራን ከትምህርት ቤት የፕራክቲከም መርሃ ግብር የሚፈልጉትን ክህሎቶች እንዳዳበሩ ወይም እንዳላዳበሩ እንዴት ያረጋግጣሉ?

4. የትምህርት ቤት ሜንተሮች እና የኮሌጅ አስተማሪዎች እጩ መምህራን የሚፈልጉትን እርዳታ ለመስጠት ስላሳዩት ቁርጠኝነት እና ፍላጎት ምን ይሰማዎታል?

5. የኮሌጅ እና የትምህርት ቤቶዎ የተግባር መርሃ ግብሩን ተግባራት ለመወጣት ምን ያህል በጥሩ ሁኔታ እየሰሩ እንደሆነ መግለፅ ይችላሉ?

6. በትምህርት ቤቶዎ ውስጥ ለእጩ መምህራን እና ለትም/ቤትዎ ሜንተር መምህራን ትክክለኛ የክፍል ውስጥ የማስተማር ልምምድ ምቹ ሁኔታን ለመፍጠር ያለውን ትስስር እንዴት ይገመግማሉ?

7. በፕራክቲከም መርሃ ግብር ትግበራ ወቅት ያጋጠሙ ተግዳሮቶች ምን ምን ነበሩ?

8. የፕራክቲከም መርሃ ግብሩን በተሻለ ሁኔታ ተግባራዊ ለማድረግ ምን መደረግ አለበት ብለው ያስባሉ?

ስለሰጡኝ ቃለ-ምልስ እጅግ አመሰግናለሁ!

ተመራማሪው

Appendix J: Evaluation checklist for Students' Participation in school activities other than teaching (to be filled by school coordinators). Prac. Iv. (Prac.302)

Student(s)   Name(s):

_____

Evaluator Name: _____

 Tick 0(unobservable), 1(Poor), 2(Good), 3(Very good), or 4(Excellent) to indicate if the criteria achieved

No.	Items		1	2	3	4
1	Sensitive to school problems					
2	Willingness to assist others					
3	Willingness to carry out tasks after school hours					
4	Provide concrete suggestions for improving school management					
5	Willingness to provide help to students with special needs					
6	Significance of the extra-curricular activity(ies) performed.					

<u>Additional comments</u>

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_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix K: Tutor's Evaluation Checklist for Prac.IV (Prac.302)

DIRECTION: Based on the student's effort and performance, evaluate the mentee using the checklists below by ticking (□) in the box of your choice against each item.
TEACHING PRACTICE EVALUATION FORM

Observer		Student-teacher		
Subject		**Date**		
Title of Lesson		**Grade**	**Unit:**	

Tick 0 (unobservable), 1 (Poor), 2 (Good), 3 (Very good), or 4 (Excellent) to indicate if the criteria were achieved.

Objectives of the Lesson	0	1	2	3	4	Comments
Clear						
Appropriate/relevant						
Communicated to students						
Achieved						

Teaching Activities	0	1	2	3	4	Comments
Well organised						
Varied						
Using Active Learning methods						
Well-paced						
The positive challenge for students						

Assessment Mechanisms	0	1	2	3	4	Comments
Appropriate/relevant						
Effective						
Continuous/varied						
Students aware of assessment						
Students received constructive feedback.						

Student-Teacher skill of teaching	0	1	2	3	4	Comments
Showed high level of subject knowledge						
Delivered knowledge at an appropriate level						
Used a range of relevant example						
Communicated clearly & effectively						
Interacted positively with students						
Used the board properly						
I enjoyed the lesson.						
Fluency in the language used.						

Student teachers' behaviour	0	1	2	3	4	Comments
Interested in the lesson						
Participated actively in teaching						
Understood what was expected						
Enjoyed the lesson						

Two successful things about the lesson
One or two suggestions for improvement
General comments

Action to be taken by student-teacher to the next period	
General comments from the teacher observed	
Time spent on post-observation discussion minutes	Date

Appendix L: Lesson plan evaluation format to be used by college evaluators for Prac. Iv. (Prac.302)

Tick 0 (unobservable), or 1(Poor), or 2(Good), or 3(Very good), or 4(Excellent) when the criteria are achieved

No.	Items	0	1	2	3	4
1	How far does the lesson plan derive from, and is related to, the unit of study?					
2	To what extent do the objectives are clear					
3	To what extent do the objectives are measurable					
4	To what extent do the objectives are appropriate to the learners					
5	How far the lesson activities related to the objectives					
6	To what extent does the lesson plan take into account the background of the students					
7	How is the adequacy of the teaching materials included?					
8	How far does the plan provide a clear lesson beginning (preparing the student for what is to be learned), middle learning activities, and culmination (Summary, conclusion, and transfer)					
9	To what extent does the plan account for where the activities will take place and for transitions (change & movements)					
10	To what extent does the plan provide for assessing learners on the extent to which they have accomplished the lesson objectives					
11	How far is the lesson likely "doable" within the time available					

Comments:

_____

Appendix M: Evaluation of Teaching Material used in the lessons (Prac.302)

Evaluate student' the quality of the teaching materials used during team teaching by putting a tick in the box as follows:

Tick 0(unobservable), or 1(Poor), or 2(Good), or 3(Very good), or 4(Excellent) when the criteria are achieved.

No.	Criteria	0	1	2	3	4
1	Relevance to the lesson presented					
2	Quality - Concerning physical perception problems					
3	Effort - Made in producing the material; time, and energy;					
4	The originality of the Material					
5	Application Timely Exhaustive					
6	Practical contribution to Promoting the Lesson					

Comments_____

_____

Appendix N: Checklist to Evaluate Students' Lesson Observation and Evaluation (Prac.302)

Evaluate students' Lesson Observation and Evaluation from their portfolio by putting a tick in the box as follows:

Tick 0(unobservable), or 1(Poor), or 2(Good), or 3(Very good), or 4(Excellent) when the criteria are achieved

No.	Items	0	1	2	3	4
1	Adequacy of observation of teacher activity					
2	Adequacy of observation of student activity					
3	Efforts made to identify successful things in lessons					
4	Adequacy of the reasons for the successful things					
5	The value of the recommendation(s) for improvement					
6	The degree of critical analysis and reflection on the lesson observed.					
7	The quality of the general comment					

Comment_____

_____

_____

Appendix O: Checklist to Evaluate Students' Practicum Portfolio Report

AREA	Assessment for Practicum Portfolio Report				Ass. (1-4)
	Excellent (4)	**Good (3)**	**Fair (2)**	**Poor (1)**	
Organisation	Information is very organised with well-constructed paragraphs and subheadings.	Information is organised with well-constructed paragraphs.	Information is organised, but paragraphs are not well-constructed.	The information appears to be disorganised.	
Quality of information	Information relates to the main topic. It includes several supporting details and/or examples.	Information relates to the main topic. It provides 1-2 supporting details and/or examples.	Information relates to the main topic. No details and/or examples are given.	Information has little or nothing to do with the main topic.	
Mechanics paragraph construction	No grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors. All paragraphs include an introductory sentence, explanations or details, and a concluding sentence.	Almost no grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors; most paragraphs include the introductory sentence, explanations or details, and concluding sentence	A few grammatical spelling or punctuation errors. Paragraphs included related information but were typically not constructed well.	Many grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors. The paragraphing structure was not clear, and sentences were not typically related within the paragraphs.	

AREA	Assessment for Practicum Portfolio Report				Ass. (1-4)
	Excellent (4)	**Good (3)**	**Fair (2)**	**Poor (1)**	
The overall quality of the portfolio	All work is completed to a high standard; the performance quality is very high in all areas.	Most work is completed; good progress in improving the quality of overall performance; few areas still need improving.	Some work is completed; some progress in improving the quality of work; some sections could be improved.	Work is not completed; poor quality of work & little effort; can do much better.	
Clarity	Very legible handwriting Easy to understand Very good & correct use of vocabulary/scientific terms	Legible handwriting Understandable Good & proper use of vocabulary	Somewhat legible Understandable to some extent At least some correct language is used.	Illegible Difficult to understand Used wrongly use of vocabulary	
Reflective diary	Well-developed reflection, critical ability, and self-analysis; all reflective activities completed	Good ability to reflect and criticise; most reflective activities completed	Some reflection, some longer comments, and some reflective activities were completed.	Little reflection; very brief comments; not all reflective activities completed	
Recommendation for improvement:					
College Supervisor name and signature: _____					

Appendix P: Practicum Coordinator Interview Transcript

I: What do you think are the basic assumptions and philosophical foundations underlying the new teacher education programmes? And what are the goals of the programme?

PC: Do you mean the practicum or the general programme?

I: Yes, for the practicum. In fact, the practicum occupies a large portion of the programme. What is the philosophical basis for this?

PC: Ok, but what I'm going to tell you is from my personal reading. I think the theoretical foundation of the programme is a constructivist theory. The learner can construct knowledge by himself. The theoretical basis is constructivist theory. Research has proved this. In order to produce well-educated, competent teachers, educators must present theory and practice side by side. A student teacher learns about learning theories in college and observes and experiments with them during practicum settings. Eventually, he will develop his own theories.

I: Personal theories, you mean?

PC: It is in this way that effective teachers can emerge. Literature says that giving teachers theories is not enough to make them good teachers.

I: So, can we say that these theoretical assumptions and theoretical foundations underlie the goals of the programme? In light of these theoretical foundations, what is being done?

PC: In the programme document, the goals are designed in line with these theories. One major goal is to produce reflective practitioners who can develop their own personal theories based on their own specific situations. Along with this theory, there is a suggested model. According to this model, student teachers should have exposure to the reality of schools starting right from the beginning of the programme. They should learn the theoretical part in college. In the meantime, they should

experience reality in practice. This provides them with the opportunity to integrate theory and practice and to construct knowledge on their own. In order to do this, student teachers should observe schools. They should also do peer-teaching and microteaching in the classroom before they have longer practice teaching periods to make sense of everything they've learned in class.

I: If we were about to do a SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis of the programme, what would you say?

PC: The strength of the programme seems to be that it enables student teachers to better understand school situations than they would before. They were able to experience the realities of school. It also created an opportunity for teacher educators to read extensively about teacher education. For example, they had to have a clear understanding of teaching, action research, assessment, etc., because they had to evaluate student teachers in a real school situation. In the preceding teacher education programme, instructors were focusing on pure academic tasks; they were not that much concerned about teaching skills. But now, as the student teachers are challenging them on grading, they have started to worry about issues of teaching. And I think this is one positive development. What is more, the schoolteachers (cooperating teaching) are also positively affected by this programme. Our student teachers discuss issues like student-centered methods, teaching materials, and the like in the schools they have been assigned to. They sometimes carry their own teaching aids to these schools. In this way, I think the programme has its own positive impact on the trainees.

I: What opportunities do you think there would be if we were to realise all the elements of the shift?

PC: If awareness is created among all stakeholders (the instructors, school teachers, and school leaders), I don't think it will be difficult to implement the shift. For example, if you assigned student teachers from each department to a two-week practicum session every semester, it wouldn't add more work to the school system,

and both the college management and the student teachers would be able to make good use of the time.

I: Do you think lack of awareness can be a threat to the success of the programme?

PC: Yes, I do. But if that awareness were developed, it would be an opportunity.

I: The programme document recommends a strong collaboration between colleges and schools or a good college-school partnership as one means to the success of the programme. In this respect, how do you view the existing collaboration between this college and partner schools?

PC: It is very weak. I can say there is none at all. In different countries, schoolteachers are aware that they are equally responsible as college instructors, and those schools are teacher training centers, too. But there is no awareness of that kind in our context.

I: But the officials in the Regional Education Bureau and zonal education desks say that they are working towards this end. They say that schools are all cooperative. How do you think they say so?

PC: Yes, our partner schools host our student teachers in fear of the officials in the woreda or zonal education offices. There are occasionally directives or instructions issued from these offices. However, the second reason for their cooperation is the schoolteachers' belief that our student teachers give them days off. Indeed, they get some rest when our student teachers handle their classes. This is the most important practical reason, not what they think their role is in the programme.

I: How do you make sure that the school and college stay in touch during the practicum? Are there lead teachers in each school who make sure that the student teachers' field experiences go smoothly?

PC: Yes, they set up a committee between the regional education bureau and the college at the beginning of the programme. But they did not meet more than once. Later, we formed a link with the schools. Now there are coordinators at the school

level. There are four coordinators through whom we send our student teachers. Initially, training was given for two directors and two coordinators from each school because they were believed to help our student teachers with active learning, action research, and other related aspects. Now that has been completed, we call each school to send two coordinators. Then we place student teachers in the schools. The coordinators are informed about what they have to do and they are made to facilitate things there. We pay them some reimbursement and they do the work. If there is no payment, they don't do the work.

I: What about at the department level? For example, do you not give any training to schoolteachers in the English or Biology departments?

PC: No, never at all.

I: Is there ongoing communication between college instructors and cooperating teachers to ensure that linkages between courses and field experiences are clearly evident? What is the ongoing communication between the schools and the college like?

PC: Our communication is only when we have practicum placements. We often call the schools to inform them that we are about to send our student teachers. We sometimes go to the nearby schools to inform them.

I: Do you give orientation to the student teachers about their duties, roles, and rights in the schools when they are placed or before they go out to school?

PC: No, they get this information through the coordinators in the schools.

I: Do the student teachers have a guideline on how to organise their school experiences?

PC: Yes, First of all, they are given a course outline. Other than these, objectives, activities, and assessment forms, they also take a portfolio form in which they fill out some things, [for example], lesson plan forms, action research guidelines, and

teaching materials. There are also corresponding checklist forms for instructors who supervise them.

I: What about information about their relationship with the cooperating teachers at school?

PC: There is a sort of orientation. We tell them that they have to speak to them (the school coordinators) to be assigned to different classes and that they have to ask them if they face any problems.

I: What about their duties and rights?

PC: This is just part of the orientation. Because there are related tasks, we tell them to abide by the school rules and regulations just like any teacher in the school.

I: What types of reflective experience does the programme provide for student teachers? What kind of support are student teachers given about how they monitor and reflect on their field and school experiences?

PC: We have different mechanisms. The guidelines are one, and the portfolio format is another. For example, after they prepare a lesson plan and teach the lesson, they make a lesson evaluation. If it is a school observation, they write reports. They are made to include their reflections there. The supervising instructors also conduct feedback sessions after their observations. They also conduct action research. These are all the ways. However, there is no one-shot intensive mechanism here.

I: Do student teachers have any opportunities in the system to work in groups, for example, to discuss their school experiences, to share their experiences, to observe one another just like peer reflective groups?

PC: No, we do not have anything designed in this way. Of course, they are used occasionally to make minute plans in a group. As you have said, there are different things like critical friends to facilitate reflection in the literature.

I: Do student teachers and supervisors hold pre-and post-teaching conferences?

PC: No, but student teachers do that with their fellow students by themselves.

I: What do you think the reason is?

PC: Perhaps a lack of awareness. I have come to see all these issues these days as I read the literature because of my assignment to this position. Previously, we simply expected our student teachers to go to schools and practice teaching there by default. By the way, it should have been designed in such a way that all teacher educators from all departments would have participated in it. Nevertheless, now the programme is running in the way I imagined. Now I have come to realise that all these things should have been known by all. Discussion forums should be organised in all departments, but we have not yet done it. Most of the things we have mentioned so far can be done successfully not by a single coordinator alone, but by everyone in the college. I think the main problem is this. For example, if I suggest doing something in a certain way, everything goes that way. No one tries to make a justifiable challenge. But if there were an awareness development programme, they could help me or do something better.

I: Another issue is the nature of the help the cooperating teachers provide for student teachers. How efficiently do you think they are aware of their roles and responsibilities? How much do you think they are aware of their roles?

PC: I would rather say there is nothing as such. Now if you try to see the simple representation, you can say that when our student teachers arrive at the schools where they are assigned, the school teachers hand in their classes to them and disappear from the schools. But in principle, the cooperating teachers should work with the student teacher with a close follow-up from the beginning to the end of the trainee's placement. Unfortunately, the schoolteachers use the trainee's school placement as a vacation. So it is possible to say there are no cooperating teachers or mentors in the programme. We can say that it is so because of a lack of awareness. The cooperating teachers in the school are no better than our student teachers. We tell them about student-centered teaching here on campus, but what they see happening there in schools is quite the opposite. I think it may have had

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some negative impact on them. So it is better to say the cooperating teachers are non-existent. It is the coordinators who assign student teachers, follow their attendance, and help them if they have some problems. But these people cannot assist the student teachers with pedagogical issues. The mentors are not working.

I: Student teachers are supposed to compile or construct portfolios about their field experiences. How are they going about it?

PC: We advise them, we give them guidelines, and we tell them to compile every single piece they do. But some supervising instructors require their supervisees to do all that they were told to, while others focus only on teaching evaluation. So, the clients of the second advisor don't have to worry about their portfolio.

I: What is student teacher supervision like? Are there any perceived problems?

PC: The number of supervisors' school visits is very limited. Another problem is the inability to employ the right method of practicum supervision.

I: How frequently do supervising instructors visit their supervisees during their placement?

PC: For example, during the longest practicum session, they visit them twice. The first visit is meant to observe them throughout the lesson and give them feedback. The second one is for evaluation purposes. I don't think this was designed so in the programme document. Due to money problems, it is being used as a test to see how well our student teachers can teach what they have learned on campus.

I: Do you think this is related to the applied science model or technical-rationality model of practice teaching?

PC: I strongly believe that this is the foundation for our practices. This is the dominant assumption among college teacher educators and schoolteachers. This must be changed. Unless it is changed, no one listens to you even when you try to explain things from the new perspective. These underlying assumptions attract them to that end.

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I: How do you think this problem, incongruity between discourse and practice, could be solved?

PC: The ongoing HDP (Higher Diploma Programme) is one great thing. The very process of the HDP reflects the same thing that our programme is striving for, so when instructors go out for supervision, they will reflect it. Similar training like CPD (Continuous Professional Development) is given for primary school teachers. However, the teacher educators should undergo this type of training first. This seems to be the rationale for the earlier commencement of HDP than of CPD. In addition, teacher educators should have exposure to international experiences in different ways because most people think that the government has simply copied and imposed these innovations for no logical reasons. Therefore, people must read and discuss these issues. I know there are many African countries that have good experience with educational innovations. We can establish a link with other colleges to have exposure; otherwise, we have to go through the literature. We can network with well-known teacher education institutions, and everyone has access to the literature thanks to Internet technology.

Appendix Q: Sample of Supervisor-Supervisee Post-Teaching Conference Observation Transcript

S: Ok

S: All right, X. Welcome to the first discussion session. That's good. I mean to reveal what you see as your strengths and weaknesses, but before I give you my feedback, could you please tell me how you feel about them, particularly your strengths and weaknesses? Yeah, yeah, no, no [don't be afraid]; I mean yeah...

T: I'm talking about I think it may be. I think I'll give it a shot. I have tried to present the lesson according to the lesson plan I have prepared as much as possible. But you know, whether I fulfill your criteria, I don't know.

S: No, I don't have any new criteria... You know the criteria, you know the traits or qualities of good teachers, and you use these things to judge yourself.

T: Right, but as a new teacher, I know I have some issues. For example, in presenting language problems, language problems, how to manage the classroom and the like, I have tried as much as possible to manage the classroom. Of course, in terms of discipline, I've tried to present the lesson as much as possible. But it is better that you tell me what I failed at.

S: No, I'm referring to your mention of some of your abilities. What are your weaknesses?

T: What's my weakness?

S: You felt something, right?

T: Correct.

S: Therefore, remember the mistakes you made, minor mistakes or the weaknesses you showed in the teaching-learning process.

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T: It's what I told you. You know,

S: Do you want to take all the feedback from me? You shouldn't do that. You have to self-evaluate yourself first. I mean, to improve your teaching, you are expected to identify your strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, as a teacher, you should be open and free. Tell me, I mean, your weaknesses and.................. I mean, you faced something, at least. You told me, I mean, some of the things that were good. What were your weaknesses?

T: I have a language problem.

S: Ok, a language problem. OK, which one and the other one?

T: Ummm... language problems, and you know, I'm afraid to present that lesson.

S: Ok

T: To a degree.

S: Okay, then.

T: I was a little scared, and so on. This will be improved in the future. I hope so.

S: Yes, I believe so. OK, let me tell you the strength I have seen. Yeah, and I mean, I have seen. First of all, your voice was nice. It was audible. Every student from the front to the back can, I mean, hear what you are saying. That is very nice. That's good. And you wrote difficult words on the blackboard with their definitions. That is also another quality that is also a strength. In addition to that, I mean, you don't feel uncomfortable, you don't feel, I mean, afraid, do you? You don't. I have seen good confidence. That's nice. And as much as possible, you managed. You tried to manage the class. These are the strengths. That's good. But when we come to the feedback, I'll ask you some questions. I mean, you teach dictation. Why do you have any intention of doing that? OK, OK. Uh... The topic title was "Dictation." **How Bees Communicate Dictation,** is that?

T: Yeah,

S: What was the objective of this session?

T: The objective of the session was, you know, as it is dictation, students were to write while I read the passage to them. You know, the correct spelling of the words and the punctuation, not at all but. This is the suggested procedure for the dictation, as we have seen in the teacher's guide. This is the suggested procedure which the teacher must use during the lesson of dictation. This is my objective.

S: Therefore, I mean students were expected to listen and write. What were ...That is good. Do you think that the objectives were achieved?

T: Actually, it is not measurable because, you know, I am not checking. I have not checked students' achievements, but this opportunity will be given to students themselves to get feedback from the mistakes they make. As I have tried to mention at that time, if you have heard, I make students assume as if it was a test out of twenty and to deduct half marks if they misspell words seriously, but when it is recognisable to deduct half marks when they do not use capital letters where necessary, these are the objectives, and I wrote the model answer on the b/b as I saw it, and that is the evaluation system I have used. But I think it is very difficult to measure the whole class's achievement at that time since the number of students is great.

S: Yes, more than forty.

T: Forty! Uhmma sixty-seven around I think you see it is difficult to measure. To some extent, I have, you know,

S: Ok. That is good. You're using one technique. There was also another one. Instead of checking all students' papers at a time, you can make them exchange their papers. They exchange their exercise books. And then, I mean, make corrections or feedback. That was, I think, one of the easiest possible solutions.

T: You know the reason why I made this?

S: Uhhm?

T: If the students have a problem with themselves, it's better to learn from their own mistakes. If I gave them... if they made students exchange their exercise books, they may not do very well for each other. But I think it is better to let them see their own mistakes based upon the model answer given to them. I think the reason why I used this is that

S: You want to see how well they perform the activity. You use one technique. But self-correction and teacher correction may appear later. It may not be applicable in this situation.

S: The other one is when you see the passage. It was too long; it was boring. Do you think that? The paragraph, or the essay, consists of three paragraphs. It was difficult, I think, to dictate. And students get bored.

T: Two paragraphs. I think it was two paragraphs.

S: Two paragraphs. It was too difficult to dictate.

T: So what can I do at that time?

S: I believe you can use it. I mean, instead of making them write, you can use only one paragraph. I mean, that was possible. I mean, I say some students are a little bored with writing all the sentences. You can change the paragraph or, umhh,

T: What has changed?

S: Either correct or reduce

S: On the other hand, you wrote all the passages on the blackboard. Why?

T: This is the model answer, as I told you.

S: I see.

T: What I need at that point, by depending on the model answer or looking at it, is for students to correct themselves and to, you know, uhh, evaluate themselves. I am going to make students, you know, this is a suggested dictation procedure.

S: That is the suggested procedure.

K: Yeah, suggested procedure, but on the suggested procedure of dictation, it says that if you fail, I mean, if you feel a student misspelled the word,

S: Just a few words

T: Yeah, some words are edited five times. I write the model answer on the blackboard, and I follow the procedure.

S: (Laughing) so you wrote the two paragraphs that took your time.

T: You know, I have given the time.

S: That's good, but instead of writing the two paragraphs, you're focusing on a few words or phrases you think are important.

T: They may fail to write, right?

S: OK, that is OK. You may think that way. The other thing you did was use the students' L1.

T: Excuse me?

S: Students' L1. Students' target language, I mean Amharic, should you use that? I mean, why do you use Amharic now and then? Why?

T: You know, I feel they may misunderstand my instructions if I try to make students understand very well the instructions I have given to them.

S: You know, if you think your students might not understand what you're saying,

T: My instruction?

S: You can do that, but we can use students' L1 now and then.

T: Right

S: You did that, but for other times you can use students' L1 once, twice, three times, or four times. I mean in a period or a session. But if you use their L1 now and then, you know, it may not have a positive effect. That... The other thing designed was not achieved. For instance, you have said, "Correctly spell the words in the dictionary, I mean in the dictation by punctuating them." The other one... uhm... umh. I mean, what kinds of objectives should we design when we prepare the lesson plan? That should be clear, measurable, and attainable. SMART is an acronym for clear, measurable, and attainable.

T: Achievement...

S: stands for attainable, reliable, and observable.

Appendix R: Language Editing Certificate

To whom it may concern

This letter serves to confirm that editing and proofreading was done for:

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College of Education

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PRE-SERVICE PRACTICUM AT A TEACHER EDUCATION COLLEGE: A CASE IN ETHIOPIA

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Appendix T: Turn-it-in (Originality report)

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