The Curriculum Implementation Using Equitable Pedagogical Practices in Primary Schools: Its Efficacy in Promoting 21st Century Classrooms

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Introduction

Scholars are advocating multicultural education and the theory of social constructivism for the reason that the globe is becoming a small village where we find heterogeneous society at every corner of the world. Likely, they are encouraging avoiding segregation and promoting diversity in schools that provoke policymakers and educational planners at all levels in the development of intercultural competencies of teachers and students to avoid schools with low diversity (UNESCO, 2013; Banks & Banks, 2001). Accordingly, multicultural education curriculum incorporates content integration, knowledge domain, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy and empowering school culture and social structure (Banks and Banks 1995b). This ensures that the school curricula need to incorporate diversity as a cross-cutting issue through addressing religious, ethnic and other forms of critical aspects of education in the world in general and Ethiopia in particular. This cross-cutting issues are in the positions to be implemented through critical and equitable pedagogical practices in the schools and classrooms.

Diversity in education represents large ideas and initiatives to create learning environments that are safe, inclusive and equitable for different identities in the school context as much as possible. Practically, mother tongue education has a profound impact on a person's sense of identity and well-being. More specifically, Ethiopia is naturally endowed with multi-ethnic, multilingual and multicultural settings. However, this reality was condensed by the past regimes' policies of the country for the political purpose of "one nation-one country rule" until the fall of the Derg regime in Ethiopia (ETP, 1994). The discriminatory policies in the past had denied the reality of diversity on ethnic basis and insisted on praising the culture of one hegemonic group as superior mainstream and looked down into the cultures of other nations. As a result, these diversified people have been forced and assimilated to the mainstream culture. Based on this acculturation political view, Ethiopia's educational policy was influenced by the unitary system of governance. Western ideologies from the USA's melting pot cultures and French assimilation policy were adopted informally and applied as instruments of mainstreaming (UNESCO, 2008). In certain multi-ethnic societies, dominant groups believe that their cultural practices are superior to those of minority groups. Cultural homogenization is an aspect of cultural globalization and reduction in cultural diversity through popularization and diffusion of a wide array of cultural symbols (Justin and Zachary, 2008; Melluish, 2014). This involves the process

of assimilation whereby other ethnic groups are expected to adopt the culture and practices of the dominant ethnic group in the society.

In the long-lasting hegemonic political system, without considering ethnic, linguistic and cultural differences, learners from nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia were forced to learn in Amharic language of the superior culture as medium of instruction. However, multiculturalism opposes monoculturalism and rejects assimilation and the melting pot image as an imposition of a dominant hegemonic culture and instead prefers to democratic and glorious mosaic image in which each cultural group in a society maintains its distinctiveness to maximize the image of cultural pluralism. The cultural pluralism of diverse groups needs to be maintained by effective practices of additive and transformative curricula with integrated objectives, contents, learning experiences, activities, norms and values through application of critical and equitable pedagogical practices (Banks & Banks, 2007; Banks & Bank, 2001).

In the development of educational system, there is a growing recognition of the roles played by language of instruction in educational access, quality and equity, particularly for groups that have been socially marginalized (ADEA, 2010; Ollane, Adama & Glanz, 2011; UNESCO, 2012). As many students come from diverse backgrounds populate the 21st century classroom and efforts support to identify effective methods to teach these students, the needs for culturally responsive pedagogical practices maintains educational diversity among diverse groups of learners. Since, today's classroom requires teachers to educate students varying in culture, language, abilities and other diverse characteristics (Diller & Module, 2015). Thus, the diverse cultures of students are expected to be addressed through effective utilization of equitable pedagogical practices in primary classrooms.

The idea of diversity in education encompasses acceptance and respect of individuals from different backgrounds and identities (Banks & Banks, 2007). It means understanding that each individual is unique and recognizes our individual differences. The underlying philosophical paradigm behind adopting the use of mother tongue language for primary education i.e. the pedagogical advantages for the child and as a means of promoting nationality rights, the right to be educated in one's own language has been acknowledged in the UNESCO declaration (UNESCO, 2009). Each regional state of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia has the constitutional right to choose, use and to develop the individual languages spoken there and to promote the cultures of its citizens (ETP,1994). Theoretically, this political assumption contributes to exercise multiculturalism throughout the country.

In the journey of decentralization process each regional state became responsible for educational issues at the primary level meaning for instance, that regional authorities decide what languages should be used in primary education. However, a disparity in implementing the policy of mother tongue primary education between states, zones and districts restrict it to the first cycle while others extend it to the second cycle (Getachew & Derib, 2006) . The other defect lies with the practical implementation of this policy on children in Addis Ababa are forced to learn their kindergarten and primary education in Amharic regardless of their ethnic backgrounds which seriously affects the promotion of identity. In Oromia regional state, due to the presence of non-Afan Oromo speaking 'immigrant' minorities mostly in the urban centers, the use of Amharic for primary education is allowed besides using Afan Oromo as a medium of instruction (ETP, 1994). Hence, multicultural classrooms embrace diversity and incorporate ideas, beliefs, or people from different cultural backgrounds. Diverse cultural perspectives are put together to enable students to get a truly inclusive education by minimizing negative stereotypes/ prejudice reduction (Banks & Banks, 1995b). Education practitioners develop or adapt appropriate curricula and pedagogical practices to accommodate the needs of different children although

variety and flexibility in the implementation of pedagogical practices and commonalities can be found (Mesay, Girma & Solomon, 2019). Thus, effective utilization of equitable pedagogical practices enable teachers to implement the curricula to the target of addressing diversity in the schools and classrooms.

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights in its Article 26 has introduced the basic principles of human rights to the people. Regarding education, it declared the right to education insisting on the vitality of education for entire development of human personality (UNESCO, 2012). Moreover, the document presented education as a means to promote tolerance and harmony among nations, racial and religious groups. It also authorized parents to decide the kind of education appropriate to their children. On the other hand, Article 29 of the convention stresses respect for the child's cultural identity, language and values for the development of national values of the country in which the child is living (ETP, 1994). Although there was critics of multiculturalism which argue against cultural integration of different ethnic and cultural groups to the existing laws and values of the country, critics may argue for assimilation of different ethnic and cultural groups to a single national identity (Malik, 2015). By evaluating the the significance of inclusive education, education and training policy of Ethiopia has recognized the diversity of the people and provided equal respects. In this regard, the policy places the way for the implementation of multilingual and multicultural education in Ethiopia. The policy gave due emphasis to the languages of nations and nationalities to serve as medium of instruction. Despite of the existing problems, 25 of 84 spoken local languages have already been chosen to become introduced as medium of instruction at the primary level to address educational diversity using appropriate language of instruction to diverse groups of learners (Kosonen, Kimmo, Benson & Carol, 2013; Schroeder, 2013). Moreover, experts of UNESCO recommended the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in 1951 (Teferra, 1999). This mother tongue education should cover the teaching of the mother tongue as a subject and using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction in primary schools.

Our country, Ethiopia introduced mother tongue languages as mediums of instruction at primary education level using multilingual education strategies and contextualization of useful teachers' professional development theories and practices (Girma, Dawit & Geberew, 2021). However, the effectiveness of curricular implementation using varieties of mother tongue languages as mediums of instruction face multi-faceted challenges. Regarding this, educational experts of several regions, zones and districts decided whether the mother tongue should be used as a medium of instruction at grades 1-4 or 1-8. This demonstrated that the medium of instruction can not only be different within a regional state but sometimes even within zones of a region with a multi-ethnic situation. Local languages are used as media of instruction up to grade 8 in the regions of Oromia, Amhara, Tigray and Addis Ababa City (ETP, 1994).The policy ensured the use of mother tongue at primary level education and is articulated as cognizant of the pedagogical advantage of the child in learning in mother tongue and the rights of nationalities to promote the use of their languages, primary education will be given in nationality languages (ETP, 1994). Hence, the study revolves around a comparative study of addressing educational diversity targeting by using Afan Oromo and Amharic mediums of instruction in primary schools and its contribution for promoting the 21st century classroom. The following conceptual framework looks into education and training policy, and language policy pertaining to addressing educational diversity using two mediums of instruction in primary schools.
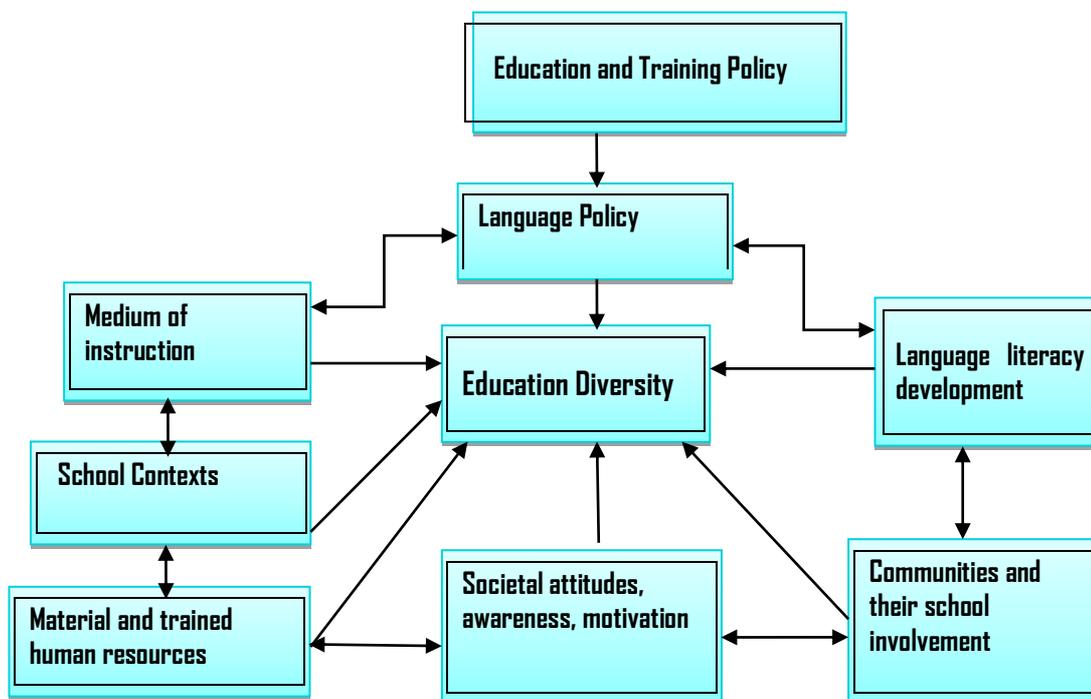
Fig. 1. Conceptual framework developed from literature

The problem statement

Educational diversity is one of the cross-cutting issues which needs to be addressed globally, nationally and locally. Today, the 21[st]century teachers produce the 21st century students in the 21st century classroom through implementing innovative and inclusive curricula using equitable pedagogical strategies like different active learning methods, assessment for learning, utilization of information and communication technologies and digital literacy. Such experiential learning takes place if and only if educational diversity is maintained in the matrix of the school system and classrooms. My long time experiences as an instructor, researcher and practicum coordinator in different colleges of teacher education allowed me to travel to different primary schools and explored varieties of cultural heritages, diversities and learning styles of students. Contextually, the study demonstrated that there is an ambitious need to address issues of diversity into the Ethiopian education and training policy. Nevertheless, some elements of dimensions of diversity such as knowledge construction process and equity and critical pedagogical practices were not exhaustively treated (Banks & Banks, 1995b; Sime & Latchanna, 2016). Likewise, while I was serving as practicum coordinator, mentor and researcher, I came across the diverse needs of students among Afan Oromo and Amharic mediums of instruction in some primary schools found in Fitche town.

Learning in a mother tongue language has pivotal roles in building ethnic identity and promoting cultural respects among different ethnic groups with diversified cultures, languages and dialects. With this regard: "International Mother Language Day is celebrated across the globe on 21st February every year! Mother tongue and multilingual education are keys to reducing discrimination, promoting inclusion and improving learning outcomes for all" (UNESCO, 2012). Correspondingly, Nelson Mandela noted an amusing expression that *"If you talk to a man in a language he understands that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language he understands that goes to his heart"* (2003, p.28).

Educational researchers have been challenged by the diversity of students such as their readiness, interests and learning profiles but have not always adequately responded to students' varied needs. They tend to rely on the logic of teach to-the-middle or one-size-fits-all approach expecting all students to do the same activity, have the same culture and work at the same pace. Likewise, a shared understanding of student diversity is reflected as dynamic and wide-ranging because none of these qualities resides entirely within an individual in their brains nor in their genes since no two children are alike (Meyer, Rose &Gordon , 2014). Yet, achieving greater equity in education is a social justice imperative to increase the supply of skills that fuel economic growth and promote social cohesion (OECD, 2016; 2014). Furthermore, educational researchers world-wise discoursed that teacher preparation is important to address inclusive and multicultural education and they are the keys to work with students who come from diverse sociocultural, racial and ethnic minority group (Banks & Banks, 2007).They asserted that teacher preparation should engage in critical and equitable pedagogical practices that should prepare teachers to build on the cultural differences of students and teach them how to develop and establish positive relationships among students, teachers, parents and community members at large.

In multicultural society like Ethiopia, one can imagine that " the effects of power naturalizes the existence of no child should be left behind creates a demarcation line and the only way to ensure that nobody is excluded to change deconstructing the very idea of inclusion, betting on an education committed to the uniqueness of subjects in which the idea of "behind" does not make sense" (Macedo, 2013). Likewise, appreciating the beauty of diversity to live together in harmony on the basis of respect and willingness of all nations, nationalities and people's strong foundation lies on promoting cultures and perpetuating their identity. Thus, diversity in education offers benefits of building democratic citizenship (European commission, 2015). Thus, institutional, instruction and personal dimensions of inclusive and multicultural education are central to address educational diversity by using different mediums of instruction in primary schools (Penina *et al*., 2005). The importance of realizing, valuing and respecting a child's family, culture, language and values is increasingly articulated in educational policy to attest diversity. Such practices can be powerful tools for extending children's knowledge and understandings of themselves and others who may be different culturally, socially or historically. However, some evidences suggest many settings provide a monocultural ideology which is counter-productive to the principles of diversity (Adam, Helen, Barrett-pugh & Caroline, 2020) and becoming sources of hegemonic outlooks and results to cause conflicts. This influences social and political justice of diverse groups of learners.

Therefore, in such multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic town, Afan Oromo and Amharic are used as mediums of instruction for primary schools following the Ethiopian policy direction (ETP, 1994). These languages are the first and second biggest languages spoken in Ethiopia respectively. However, there are remarkable differences in the utilization of educational inputs and teaching and learning processes between these groups to address educational diversity, Institutionalization and preparation of gender responsive plans at school level and effective utilization of gender inclusive language in classroom are focal points to address the diversity of students (Girma & Abraham 2019). Thus, a professional teacher has a responsibility to fulfill students' learning needs and gives quality instructional services without any students' exception (Tatto, 2021) in conducive and child friendly learning environments.

As far as my knowledge was concerned, no research has been fully conducted to address educational diversity by using the two mother tongues as mediums of instruction in primary schools to examine the diverse needs of students and discrepancies. On the bases of

my professional knowledge, reading, experiences and reflections. Therefore, I was initiated to examine educational diversity of students targeting at curriculum implementation using equitable pedagogical practices in Afan Oromo and Amharic mediums of instruction in five primary schools in Fitche town, Oromia regional state.

Objectives of the study

The main purpose of the study was to examine curriculum implementation using equitable pedagogical practices in promoting cross-cutting issues in 21st century classrooms in five primary schools of Fitche town, Oromia regional state. More specifically, the study has the following objectives. These are to:

1. evaluate the engagements of students, teachers, principals, supervisors and educational experts in curriculum implementation using equitable pedagogical practices in Afan Oromo and Amharic mediums of instruction.

2. explore whether accessible curricular materials and pedagogically trained teachers are equally assigned for students to give educational services.

3. compare and contrast the availability of educational inputs and instructional processes in Afan Oromo and Amharic mediums of instruction in primary schools in Fitche town.

4. evaluate the motivation of teachers, principals and supervisors to address education diversity of students through implementing appropriate curricular materials and equitable pedagogical practices.

5. examine availability of curricular and didactic materials, and effectiveness of pedagogical orientation and skills in promoting educational diversity in Afan Oromo and Amharic mediums of instruction.

Research questions

This section discusses the following research questions:

1. How effectively are teachers, principals and supervisors engaged in curriculum implementation using equitable pedagogical practices in Afan Oromo and Amharic mediums of instruction?

2. How do you evaluate the availability of curricular materials and resources to address educational diversity in Afan Oromo and Amharic mediums of instruction?

3. What specific pedagogical orientation, curricula and didactic materials appear to be effective tools for promoting educational diversity in Afan Oromo and Amharic mediums of instruction?

4. To which categories of medium of instruction are available curricular materials or resources allocated and pedagogically skilled teachers relatively assigned for students to give better educational services?

5. How motivated are principals, supervisors, teachers, students and parents to address educational diversity targeting at curriculum implementation using equitable pedagogical practices in Afan Oromo and Amharic mediums of instruction?

Significance of the study

In many multicultural societies like Ethiopia, the unity based on equal recognition of all nations realized through the provision of multicultural education to the young generation in the future. Hence, this study is expected to demonstrate the exact practices made to address educational diversity using equitable and critical pedagogical strategies in Afan Oromo and Amharic media of instruction in primary schools in Fitche town. Similarly, it is important to find out possible strategies to develop the practices of addressing education diversity of students (curriculum and equitable pedagogical practices) in Afan Oromo and Amharic

media of instruction. Believing that multicultural education is important in multicultural society, this study will be scaled up to other cities and towns in the region.

Materials and Methods

A qualitative research method with case study design was employed in this particular study because cases are bounded by time, activity and the researchers collect detailed information by using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Yin, 2011). With this regard, Creswell (2014) assured that case study is an approach to inquiry involving collecting qualitative data to make an in-depth investigation. Therefore, I believe that this is an appropriate method to display the status of educational diversity through curriculum implementation using equitable pedagogical strategies in Afan Oromo and Amharic mediums of instruction in Fitche town's primary schools.

Sources of data

The data were collected from both primary and secondary sources of data to get sufficient information about how to recognize and address diverse needs of students. The primary sources of the data were principals, teachers, students, supervisors and vice-academic dean of Fitche college of teacher education. Besides, the secondary sources of the data were instructional materials available online, in library, laboratory and schools' pedagogical centers. Regarding the sample size, Merriam (2009) emphasized that the size of the sample depends on the nature of research questions to be answered and the data to be collected.

Participants of the study

The research participants in qualitative case study are chosen from five primary schools according to what is known as purposive sampling technique. Accordingly, 54 participants were participated in this study. These are 4 principals, 14 teachers (9 Afan Oromo & 5 Amharic) mediums of instruction, one supervisor, one vice academic dean were interviewed and 34 students (20 Afan Oromo &14 Amharic) mediums of instruction were participated in focus group discussion. Teachers, principals and supervisors have more than 5-years experiences in their respective schools. They have diploma and first degree holders and grade 7 & 8 students are matured enough and best experiences to participate in a focus group discussion in comparison to lower grades students. Regarding this, Patton (2015) suggested that 20-30 participants are commonly included in most qualitative studies. Te sample size can also range from a single participant to hundreds thanks to the advances in qualitative data management software programs.

Data collection instruments

The most appropriate data collection strategy for case study researches are an interview, observation, focus group discussion and document analysis. Creswell (2014) suggested that the researcher should make an interview with 3 to 15 individuals. Accordingly, to collect the data from respondents, I prepared unstructured interview questions in English and then translated them into Afan Oromo and Amharic mediums of instruction. Then, an in-depth interview was made with teachers, principals, and supervisor and vice academic dean of Fitche college of teacher education from 15-20 minutes for 5 consecutive days. Besides, focus group discussion was held with 8 groups of students in all schools. Besides, focus group discussions were made with 8 groups of students (4 Afan Oromo & 4 Amharic) mediums of instruction in five primary schools for about five days to validate the data collected through interviews.

Data analysis

I synthesized the themes into textual and structural descriptions of the experiences of the individuals and then, I constructed composite descriptions of themes from my methodological, ontological and epistemological views.

Discussions of Major findings

I identified a total of 108 individual verbatim statements shared by the principals, teachers, supervisors, vice academic dean of the college of teacher education and students. From this scenario, 85 individual verbatim statements represented, relevant and non-overlapping significant statements were considered for the study. These 85 relevant verbatim statements were grouped into 5 themes and the rest 23 statements were rejected because they were unrelated to addressing educational diversity targeting at curriculum implementation through equitable pedagogical practices in Afan Oromo and Amharic mediums of instruction in Fitche town's primary schools.

Themes of the study

Motivations of teachers or implementer of curriculum and equitable pedagogical practices

The integrated contents or curricula of educational diversity represents diverse social and cultural perspectives into curricula which creates safe environments for all students. This is non-discriminatory in that all students feel comfortable while asking questions and taking risks and promoting outreach programs to the minority students and their families (Hickling-Hudson & McMeniman, 1993). This opportunities are aligned with an equity pedagogy exists when teachers modify their teaching in ways that will facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, and social-class groups (Banker & Banker, 2007). Thus, creating more diverse and inclusive classroom practices foster learning and improving social interactions. Accordingly, participant IP1 discussed that schools are governing themselves by rules and regulations prepared in 1995 and 2003 academic years. These rules and regulations were distributed to schools after contextualized by regional education bureau in Afan Oromo and Amharic mediums of instruction. The practices of the rules and regulations are monitored by parent-teacher-association. Besides, clear information was emblazoned on the notice boards or walls in both media of instruction (Date: 03/2/2019; Time: 3:25-3.50' P.M).

Besides, the participant (IP4) discussed his experience that I think providing instruction with mother tongue is for better understanding. But even though teachers' willingness is positive to teach properly, teachers turn over and retention is too high and the educational facilities are too limited to teach in Amharic in comparison to Afan Oromo medium of instruction in our school (Date: 03/2/2019;Time 3:55-4:10' P.M).

The other participant (IP7) stated that sometimes teachers are forced to teach in the mother tongue with which they have not taken any training at all because of shortage of teachers trained in Amharic medium of instruction in Oromia region state. For instance, some teachers are teaching in Amharic medium of instruction because of simply trying to speak Amharic as a second language but certified in Afan Oromo medium of instruction (Date: 03/2/2019; Time: 5:25-5: 40' P.M).

Furthermore, a student, 'X' in a focus group discussion shared their ideas that sometimes teachers teaching in Amharic medium of instruction are out of their fields of specialization. For example one teacher teaches chemistry, biology and mathematics….. Besides, some teachers have the problems of expressing their ideas in Amharic freely because

I think that they were not learning and certified in Amharic medium of instruction in their previous training institutions (Group 2, Date: 26 /12/2019; Time: 8:25-10;00' AM)).

On the other hand, IP8 suggested that though teaching-learning process is for best understanding with mother tongue and teachers' willingness is positive to teach properly, teachers turn over and retention are relatively low and educational facilities are moderate to teach in Afan Oromo in comparison to Amharic medium of instruction (Date: 29/11/2018 & Time 9:55-10:10'A.M). Besides, a student, 'R' assured that teachers are trained in Afan Oromo medium of instruction and they are teaching their students in Afan Oromo medium of instruction as well and which is motivating regardless of its quality (Date: 04/11/2019 & Time: 11:15-12:25' PM).

Additionally, a student, 'L' in focus group discussion shared her ideas and assured that teachers who are teaching in Afan Oromo medium of instruction are relatively better in number and qualification to address the diverse needs of students than Amharic medium of instruction. They are also teaching in their field of study though the number of students is greater than 50 in all classes and difficult to manage (Group 5, Date: 24 /11/2019 & Time: 3:00-4:45' PM).

With respect to motivations, participant IP13 centrally summarized that Afan Oromo medium of instruction have better qualifications and number of teachers than Amharic medium of instruction where teachers are becoming less in number due to retirement, attrition and death. The other issue is that I haven't seen any motivation or rewards given to teachers in primary schools in Fitche town. Because of his/her top performance regardless of Afan Oromo and Amharic media of instruction, no one has got any motivation and rewards (Date: 27/11/2019, & Time 2:45-2: 55' P.M).

The central idea of this theme is that the perception of front-line implementer of the curriculum (teachers) through using appropriate equitable pedagogical practices to address educational diversity of students in Afan Oromo medium of instruction is better than Amharic medium of instruction. Besides, teachers teaching in Afan Oromo medium of instruction have better preparation and performance in their subject matter compared to teachers teaching in Amharic medium of instruction.

Availability of educational inputs (curricular materials and resources)

The schools take inputs form the environment and then transform them into outputs through teaching-learning process. The schools have the potential opportunities to take educational inputs or curricular materials from surrounding school communities which process and change the learning inputs to outputs. Based on this philosophical assumption, the comparison was made on the availability of educational inputs between Afan Oromo and Amharic mediums of instruction in order to address educational diversity of students.

One of the interviewees, IP18 demonstrated that leave alone the supplementary reference materials, there are shortages of student textbooks as well. I saw that there are only few old reference books written in Amharic medium of instruction found in the library. Besides, I ponder that the laboratory has no manuals written in Amharic medium of instruction but the teachers and students are doing by translating the material from Afan Oromo to Amharic mediums of instruction. There are shortages of equipment and chemicals to make experiment even simple tasks in the laboratory. I was a home-room teacher for grade 7 students but still now some students do not have Amharic, civics & mathematics text books (Date: 04/1/2019;Time: 2:50-3:15' P.M).

On the other hand, one of the interview participants (IP5) centrally highlighted that some science books for references in Afan Oromo medium of instruction were bought last year and placed in the library but not enough to more than 2000 students in our schools.

Likewise, I think there are better but not enough educational facilities to teach in Afan Oromo medium of instruction in comparison to Amharic medium of instruction in the library and pedagogical centers of our schools. Besides, student text books to student ratio are nearly 1:1 in Afan Oromo medium of instruction. For example, excess science and mathematics books were in the libraries even though they were not well-organized (Date: 28/2/2019;Time:5:30-6:00' P.M).

Similarly, students 'T' in focus group discussion make a thorough debate that though the management of the schools and parent-teacher-association are remaining the same in our schools but I am witnessing shortage educational materials such as text books, reference books, work sheets to large number of students in a single class (more than 80 students) due to shortage of teachers in Amharic compared to Afan Oromo medium of instruction…… (Group 6, Date: 25/2/2019;Time: 3:00-4:50' PM.).

A particular concern is the impact of school policies and procedures on the allocation of resources which affect curriculum implementation using critical and equitable pedagogical strategies to address diversity of learners in schools. The school policies and procedures impact on the delivery of services to students from diverse backgrounds. Hence, the central message of this theme is that Afan Oromo medium of instruction has relatively available educational inputs to provide better educational services in comparison to Amharic medium of instruction to address educational diversity in primary schools of Fitche town.

Curricular practices/ instruction using equitable pedagogical practices

When the quality of instruction such as curriculum and its pedagogical equity application (books, teaching methods and activities) are worse marginalized, the students culturally experienced disconnection with the learning environment in the school. For some students such rejection of school may take the form of simply under achieving, for others rejection could range from not performing at all to dropping out of school completely. Pertaining such marginalization, multicultural education seeks to create equal educational opportunities for all students including those from different racial, ethnic, and social-class group (Banks & Banks, 2001; Girma and Abraham, 2019). Thus, it tries to create equal educational opportunities for diversified groups of learners.

One of the interviewees (IP10) ensures that it is difficult to get Amharic medium of instruction teachers on markets for employment according to the current deviance because we have only Fitche college of teacher education that is training only few prospective teachers. These are 60-80 preservice teachers region-wide annually. Due to this reason, the teacher to student ratio is becoming greater than 1:73 and sometimes 1:84 (unmanageable size) for grade 7 in Amharic medium of instruction whereas the student to teacher ratio in Afan Oromo medium of instruction is 1:51 sometimes it reaches to 1:56 (Date: 23/12/2019; Time: 3:15-4:15' PM). From this, we can infer that the class size is too large in Amharic medium of instruction in comparison to Afan Oromo medium of instruction to address educational needs of each learner. IP12 further extended his reflection that "in our context, there is weak pedagogical center with insufficient teaching aids and the problems of laboratory centers are the worst of all challenges to teach necessary knowledge and skills to students effectively and efficiently (Date: 24/12/2019; Time: 4:45-5:00' P.M).

Besides, one of the respondents (IP18) overshadowed that in both Afan Oromo and Amharic mediums of instruction, one teacher is teaching more than three subjects but trained in the college to teach only major and minor subject areas. They are highlighted that students are learning in 1-5 (cooperative learning and micro learning) to improve their communication, understanding, reflections and performances but it is difficult for teachers to manage the classroom and give continuous assessment to 56 student in Afan Oromo and 84 students in

Amharic medium of instruction respectively. For instance, grade 7 students of Afan Oromo and Amharic mediums of instruction in a single classroom. As senior teacher, I have to use different active learning methods and continuous assessment techniques. But it is difficult to manage more than 50 students in a single class. Even classroom management itself is a challenge, suffocation, and sound, narrowness of table and health problems like common colds, COVID-19, tuberculosis and other air born diseases. At the same time until recently, student in Amharic medium of instruction has no chemistry and English teachers. Therefore, some teachers try to enter the class once per week simply to cool the complaints from students. For example, chemistry grade 7 (Date, 21/2/2020; Time: 10:00-10:30' A.M).

Similarly, excessive training was given by Fitche college of teacher education mainly for the purpose of practicum program implementation on the application of integrated pedagogical content knowledge, active learning methods, assessment for learning, action research, classroom management and continuous professional development. These training were successfully given to Afan Oromo in comparison to Amharic mediums of instruction. These training has positive impacts on quality of instruction and are better to address all teachers of course. Because, we don't have educators trained in Amharic medium of instruction at all though there are small number of Amharic medium of instruction teacher candidates at Fitche college of teacher education (Date: 21/2/2019; Time 9:40-10:00' A.M).

Likely, a student, 'D' in focus group discussion suggested that it is difficult to expect quality of teaching-learning process where it is difficult to implement active learning methods and continuous assessment due to large number of students, shortage of instructional materials and teacher preparation. However, when we talk from our experiences, Afan Oromo medium of instruction students are relatively learning better than Amharic medium of instruction particularly at higher levels of primary schools from grades 5-8….. Even, this can negatively affect the attitudes of students from diverse backgrounds to address educational diversity (Group 8, Date: 27 /12/2020;Time: 8.45-10:50' A.M).

The central idea of this theme is that instructions given for Afan Oromo medium of instruction students are relatively better than Amharic medium of instruction particularly at higher levels of primary schools. Although the attempts of implementing culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Penina *et al*., 2005) were encouraging, teacher's self-reflection is important to analyze the attitudes and beliefs about themselves and others. Although many attempts are made the curricula developmentally appropriate to the ages and stages of children and standardize to the theoretical and practical contextual settings (Girma *et al*., 2021) to prevent the generic one size fits for all generic syllogism, the practices of children-centered learning in schools are contradicting with integrated play-based pedagogical practices (Mesay *et al*., 2019). Thus, as teachers' values cause impact relationships with students' learning and their families, teachers must reconcile negative feelings towards any groups.

Accessibility of teachers and relevance of primary schools' curricula

One of the interviewees, 'IP9' well elaborated that it is difficult to fulfill the needs of all schools in the Cities of Oromia regional state in Amharic medium of instruction because it is only Fitche college of teacher education that trains 60-80 teacher candidates annually in Amharic medium of instruction in comparison to more than 600 candidates of Afan Oromo medium of instruction in Fitche college of teacher education alone.

On one hand, fostering the capacity of teachers towards science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) diversity (Davis-lowe, 2006) and curricular responses to multiculturalism (Hickling-Hudson & McMeniman, 1993) potentially guarantee quality of instruction in the classrooms. However, the availability of teachers in Amharic medium of

instruction is low in comparison to Afan Oromo medium of instruction. On the other hand, with respect to the relevance of the curricula and its equitable pedagogical utilization, the overall curricula of colleges of teacher education are symmetrical with primary schools curricula. Thus, teaching the schools' curricula and teacher education needs to have relationships to maintain diversity of groups of learners (Banks and Banks,1995b). Thus, preservice teacher trainees are practicing their teaching profession passim four practicum courses in primary schools for three years (Date: 28/11/2020; time: 3:25-3:40' P.M).

Moreover, one of the respondents from focus group discussion 'V' inspected that they are helping us in teaching the subject matter (curriculum contents and activities) by preparing themselves as much as they can….However, they are too busy throughout the school time in teaching 30 periods per a week. Often, the teaching-learning process was covered by teacher candidates assigned by college of teacher education for teaching practices/practicum for 45 days (Group7, Date: 25/12/2020;Time: 4:15-4:50' PM).

Opportunities of curriculum implementation and equitable pedagogical practices

In high performing schools, all members of the school community both individually and collectively hold themselves accountable to address students' diverse needs and successes (ADEA, 2010; Girma and Abraham, 2019). Hence, staffs with sense of common purposes, strong instructional leadership, principals, confidence and respect of parents and resources support the school's vision, mission and destinations.

In respect of providing opportunities to address educational diversity using Afan Oromo and Amharic media of instruction, IP11 supposed that the best opportunity we have is that we must work in collaboration with the society to fulfill educational inputs such as curricular materials and through utilization of equitable pedagogical practices. This addresses educational diversity of students in Afan Oromo and Amharic media of instruction in primary schools found in Fitche town. Besides, the region should improve and redesign new Amharic and Afan Oromo primary schools' curricula in line to initial teacher preparation, induction and in-service programs to address the diverse needs of learners (Date 12/1/2020;Time: 5:40-5:55'P.M).

The central ideas of this theme are searching for the best opportunities that enable us to address educational diversity by using both Afan Oromo and Amharic mediums of instruction. For instance, working in collaboration with society, begin teacher training programs in Amharic medium of instruction in some College of teachers' education in Oromia regional state.

The Researchers' Methodological, Epistemological and Ontological Perspectives

An exploration to minimize subjectivity by using Afan Oromo and Amharic mediums of instruction to address educational diversity of students targeting on the quality of curriculum and effectiveness of pedagogical strategies in primary schools of Fitche town is undeniably contributes to the success of multiculturalism. Methodologically, my knowledge development paradigm leads to exploratory effort and provides further rationales for strategic decisions regarding data collection, participants' selection and data analysis. The study has epistemological implication in that the interactive relationships between me and the respondents is subjective and guiding where multiple realities are emerged to create complexity of the texts and contexts. From my engagement in this project, I appreciated that giving instruction in both mediums of instruction in the four primary schools of Fitche town is

encouraging to address educational diversity. However, while the comparison is carried out, Afan Oromo medium of instruction has more access and possible opportunities to curricular materials and pedagogical practices compared to Amharic medium of instruction. This ontological difference observed in the primary schools were emanated from lack of awareness and weak emphasis given to education system by the government, non-governmental bodies, faith-based organization, parent-teacher-association, parents, school communities and societies at large.

Data validation strategies

The most commonly used strategies during the process of data validation under case study are corroboration by participants and agreement between coders (Creswell, 2014). I made corroboration with participants through presenting and discussing the data between the research participants and us to verify that the themes are properly identified and discussed. Hence, hot discussions were further made on the findings of the study with 40 participants; 4 principals, 12 teachers and 24 students for 2:00 hours. Discussions were made with respect to the questions asked during interview, focus group discussion and researcher's sense organs' witness through observation. Therefore, I wrote the report by using five thematic units developed from 85 individual verbatim statements and ideas from further corroboration of the data made with participants. Furthermore, I ensured the validity of instruments, data analyses and research questions in line to the objectives of the study.

Conclusions and recommendations

Effective lines of communication, critical thinking and making critical reflections on multicultural education are dynamic pillars to create peaceful and welcoming learning environment in schools in particular and the society at large. Conversely, upper primary, secondary and higher education institutions become the centers of conflicts because of the power effects associated with political changes and vulgarization. Undertaking wide scale researches at different educational hierarchies on inclusive education, multiculturalism or cultural pluralism assist countries with multicultural societies like Ethiopia. This small scale study focuses on curriculum implementation using equitable pedagogical practices in promoting cross-cutting issues in the 21st century classroom of five primary schools in Fitche town, Oromia regional state verified the practices of cultural responsive education (curriculum and equitable pedagogical practices) at glance. Therefore, on the bases of summarized major findings, the study was concluded as follows. These are:

The findings of the study underlined that though the attempts to address different educational needs of diverse groups of students through curriculum implementation and equitable pedagogical practices are encouraging, the willingness and motivations of front-line implementer of the curricula (teachers) in Afan Oromo mediums of instruction was better than Amharic medium of instruction. Besides, teachers who were teaching in Afan Oromo medium of instruction have better preparation and performance in their subject matter compared to teachers who are teaching in Amharic medium of instruction. Because teachers who were teaching in Afan Oromo medium of instruction were teaching in the mother tongue they were trained so far in the college of teacher education while some teachers who were teaching in Amharic medium of instruction were trained in Afan Oromo medium of instruction. The other problem was due to shortage of teachers, those who are teaching in Amharic medium of instruction are teaching many subjects for which they were not qualified but teachers were teaching in Afan Oromo medium of instruction are teaching only their major or minor subjects.

In light of philosophical assumption of the availability of curricular materials to

address educational diversity, due to socioeconomic status of the community, lack of attention to balance the diverse needs of learners and about 70% students and teachers in each school, Afan Oromo medium of instruction has relatively available educational inputs in the libraries, pedagogical centers and laboratories. I have a hope that it assists the schools to provide better educational services in Afan Oromo compared to Amharic medium of instruction.

When equity pedagogical tools of instruction (constructivist teaching-learning methods, assessment for learning and classroom management) were well qualified, the teaching-learning processes are carried out to the standards that assure quality of instruction. Here, the findings of this comparative study underlines that the quality of instruction is relatively better in Afan Oromo than Amharic medium of instruction. In Afan Oromo medium of instruction, teachers are applying active learning strategies (e.g. cooperative learning method, concept mapping, pyramiding, jigsaw, goldfish bowl, and micro-teaching), continuous assessments and classroom management) due to small class-size than Amharic medium of instruction relatively.

The opportunities of getting appropriate training and experience sharing practices on application of equitable pedagogical strategies such as using varieties of active learning methods, assessment for learning, action researches, lesson studies and classroom management were limited. However, due to better access to professional training and modified instructional materials, Afan Oromo medium of instruction teachers were relatively giving better lessons than Amharic medium of instruction teachers. As the implementer of the curricula, the quantity and quality of teachers is required. However, the accessibility of pedagogically qualified teachers was not founded to be encouraging to address the needs of all schools in cities of Oromia regional state. It is obviously known that Fitche College of teachers' education is the only college of teacher education which trains few teacher candidates in Amharic medium of instruction. Hence, it is impossible to address teachers who are giving instruction in Amharic medium of instruction to all schools. Therefore, the availability of teachers who are teaching in Amharic is insufficient in number compared to Afan Oromo medium of instruction.

Pertaining to the relevance and appropriateness of the curricula, the overall curricula of colleges of teachers' education are symmetrically aligned with primary schools' curricula. Hence, preservice teachers trainees are practicing their teaching profession through four consecutive practicum programs in primary schools for three years. The ultimate goal of the practicum courses are to familiarize teachers candidates with equitable pedagogical practices.

This study forecasts that addressing educational diversity of students in implementing various curricula using equity pedagogical strategies in Afan Oromo and Amharic mediums of instruction need vertical and horizontal collaboration on top of owing motivation and commitments of stakeholders. Better treatment of educational diversity is a potential for growth and development of ones country. This positive scenario shows the paths on how to address educational diversity in the schools and classrooms where peoples are living together on equal farewells through application of equitable pedagogical strategies. On the bases of this ground, I posed the following feasible suggestions. These are:

Regional education bureau, Fitche city administration, woreda education office, parent-teacher-association and the nearby college of teacher education should work in collaboration by using possible opportunities to build the whole school matrix to ensure educational diversity of diverse learners. Undertaking experience sharing practices with model schools, growing internal financial resources, designing and submitting projects searching for additional funds from local authorities, non-governmental and governmental organizations.

In order to address educational diversity in Afan Oromo and Amharic mediums of instruction in primary schools, woreda/district education supervisors and teacher development program, parent-teacher association, principals and teachers should develop positive attitudes, willingness and motivation to fulfill curricular materials and give awareness creation training for practitioners about pedagogical strategies on the bases of number of students and teachers in the schools system.

Likewise, additional pedagogically qualified teachers in the two media of instruction should be employed to minimize the class-size and teacher-student-ratio which was very large in Amharic compared to Afan Oromo medium of instruction to use equitable pedagogical practices in the classrooms.

Regional education bureau had better introduce best opportunities such as working in collaboration with society and begin preservice and in-service teacher training programs in Amharic medium of instruction in some College of teachers' education in Oromia regional state.

Zone education office, districts and town administration should work in collaboration with Fitche College of teacher education to design and give short-term professional training concerning subject matter knowledge and   equitable pedagogical practices to both media of instruction teachers with special attention to Amharic medium of instruction teachers. Besides, it is imperative to make additional employment of new teachers from Oromia and Amhara regional state colleges of teacher education.

Through articulating the missing voices from the paradigms and identifying critical questions that lead to enduring understandings, teachers should learn how to begin to make their lessons culturally responsive and relevant to the diverse needs of learners in schools' contexts.

Competing interests

I have declared that no competing interest exists. The products used for this research are commonly and predominantly use products in our area of research and country. There is absolutely no conflict of interest between the authors and producers of the products because we do not intend to use these products as an avenue for any litigation but for the advancement of knowledge.

Notes

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Submitted: November, 10th, 2021.

Approved: December, 03rd, 2021.