

Teacher Education: Reform grounded by evidence

The experience of the Quality Education Strategic Support Programme (QESSP)



Ministry of Education
Federal Democratic
Republic of Ethiopia

This is the first results paper documenting experiences and lessons learnt from support provided to the Ministry of Education (MoE) by QESSP.

ABOUT QESSP

The Quality Education Strategic Support Programme (QESSP) aims to enhance the capacity of the education sector in Ethiopia to improve outcomes for learners. We support partners to implement reforms, enhance policy dialogue and improve the evidence base to inform education policy by providing technical assistance, management support and flexible funds.

We focus on these areas: teacher education, school leadership, inclusive education, curriculum development, and system wide strengthening. QESSP is a four-year programme funded by UK aid from the UK government and managed by the British Council.

www.ethiopia.britishcouncil.org/QESSP



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KEY MESSAGES

Reform initiatives benefit from strong evidence, but there needs to be a demand. Stimulating the demand for concrete evidence is critical for success.

Teacher education reform should consider the whole process to be effective - from recruitment to retirement.

Uptake of new evidence is influenced by multiple factors. Identifying these factors early is as important as generating good quality evidence.



QESSP has supported the Ministry of Education to produce much needed evidence to inform decision making.

HE Dr. Tilaye Gete,
Minister of Education

The Ministry of Education (MoE) recognises the role of teachers in improving learning outcomes and has made several attempts to reform teacher education.

In 2016, a team was created by the MoE to revise the national teaching and school leadership blue book – a guideline for teacher recruitment, training, development and management. Whilst there was some useful evidence to inform the revision, most was anecdotal, lacked depth, and did not cover all thematic issues.

QESSP supported the MoE to organise a national conference on teacher education (aka the Ararat Conference) which brought together teachers, teacher educators, regional and woreda administrators, and community representatives. A key outcome was the recognition that most stakeholders were aware of the salient issues facing teacher education, but they did not have concrete evidence to fully understand the breadth and depth of the issues.

The MoE made the decision to put the review of the blue book on hold until the evidence was generated.



QESSP supported three studies to produce the required evidence.

These studies provided useful insights (see below) to support the revision of the blue book and highlight areas for further work.

Evaluating Teacher Training Practices in Ethiopia

Analysis of Teacher Demand and Supply Gap of the General Education Sector in Ethiopia: Magnitude, Determinant Factors and Possible Remedies

Effectiveness of Upgrading Teachers' Education Program of Primary Schools in Tigray Regional State

FINDINGS FROM QESSP-SUPPORTED STUDIES

Recruitment

- Most teachers joined the profession at an early age: 20-21.
- Most applicants were not amongst the top performers in the national exams (grade 10).
- The majority of teachers did not choose the profession.

Teacher management

- National teacher attrition rates were 6.4 per cent, worse than recorded in the Education Sector Development Plan V (ESDPV).
- There was a shortage of teachers at all levels of schooling and in certain subjects (math and science). Most regions faced a shortage of teachers (only two regions recorded an oversupply).
- Teachers cited salary and career prospects as the two main reasons for leaving the profession.
- Most teachers taught fewer hours than the national minimum requirement.

Training and development

- Primary school teachers were trained to teach various subjects and therefore, did not specialise.
- The post graduate diploma in teaching (PGDT) was delivered inconsistently, which resulted in variations in teaching quality.
- The continuous professional development (CPD) scheme – a mandatory 60-hour teacher development initiative - was poorly designed (not practical) and implemented. Most teachers viewed it as an imposition.
- There was no evidence of improvement in classroom practice as a result of better qualifications. The only noticeable improvement observed was better self-esteem among teachers.
- Teacher training programmes were not consistently reviewed to assess their effectiveness.

THE RESULTS

Models of best practice established

The Ministry of Education established the “Centre of Excellence in Teacher Education” to lead on teacher education reform, introduce new practices, improve existing practices and conduct research to build an evidence base for improved policy and reform. The aim is to provide better evidence for decision makers to improve the quality of education.



An updated national teaching and school leadership blue book

Once the studies were undertaken, the review of the blue book was re-instated. The review benefitted from the evidence generated from the studies and the Ararat Conference. The end result is an updated blue book, which has already led to some significant reforms. For example, a new secondary school teacher training curriculum has been introduced in three universities and is being run alongside the existing curriculum. An assessment of the effectiveness of the two curricula and training types will be carried out in a few years. For the first time in many years, university entrants in the 2017/18 academic year were assigned to teaching courses based on their interest.

A national policy conference on teacher education

Recognising the need for continued dialogue, a national conference on teacher education is planned for October 2018 in Mekelle University – a Centre of Excellence. The conference will provide the platform for policy makers to engage with the available evidence, and for academia and policy makers to collaborate to improve teacher education and management in the country.



A national teaching workforce management system

In collaboration with Addis Ababa University, a national system of workforce management is being developed. The system will enable the MoE and Regional Education Bureaus (REBs) to plan and manage the teaching force more effectively. The aim is to reduce the gap between teacher demand and supply, improve the deployment of teachers to enhance efficiency, and enhance teacher performance and management.

A national accreditation regime for teacher education colleges

Hawassa University is leading the development of a national accreditation system for all teacher education colleges. Currently, these colleges are not accredited by the Higher Education Relevance and Quality Assurance Agency, which leads to differences in standards. The accreditation system is expected to come into effect in the 2019/20 academic year.





LESSONS **LEARNED**

The following are the key lessons learned about teacher education reform and the generation and use of evidence in support of reform.

The appetite for evidence should be stimulated

The MoE assumed there was sufficient evidence at the national level to inform the reform initiative. The Ararat Conference revealed that the available evidence base was not robust and up to date. For this reason, the MoE commissioned the studies from QESSP and actively engaged throughout the project.

Leadership buy-in and local engagement is key for uptake of research recommendations

When studies are need based and performed in collaboration with the local oversight institutions (i.e. MoE), the findings are more likely to be used to make relevant and timely decisions. The end beneficiary of a study should be involved at every stage of the research – need assessment, planning, and execution.

Involving local practitioners increases the acceptance of the findings

To ensure the acceptance of the research findings, it is advisable to involve local professionals. Apart from their local knowledge and context specific knowledge, local professionals can serve as agents for ‘selling’ the research findings more widely.

Implementation is impacted by a number of factors

Some recommendations were acted on more quickly than others. Uptake speed was determined by a number of factors, such as government priorities, leadership buy-in, perceived benefits, etc.

Evidence can influence education policy and practice, but needs to be tracked and monitored

Some of the research was completed in October 2016 and many of the recommendations have already been implemented. However, there are still some reforms that have not been actioned, or require a longer time to implement. Continuous follow-up and monitoring of the uptake of study recommendations is required, including the analysis of implementation challenges.

Supplying timely and quality evidence to key decision-makers, lobbying for the uptake of recommendations, and monitoring their implementation can successfully influence education policy and practice, whilst simultaneously developing capacity where it is required (within the MoE/REBS).