Teachers' Pedagogical Practices and Students' Learning Experiences in an Ethiopian University Setting

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Abstract: There is a growing interest among higher education (HE) researchers regarding the relevance of measuring quality via the perceptions and experiences of teachers and students. However, relatively few studies have examined more broadly the pedagogical practices and student learning experiences in HE. In addition, there is minimal study that compared students' perceptions of learning behaviors with that of their teachers. The current study explores students' and teachers' perceptions about the existing pedagogical practices and learning experiences by analyzing each group's responses and examining similarities and differences between their perspectives. For this, undergraduate students (n = 536) and teachers (n = 89) at a large public university in Ethiopia voluntarily participated in filling out two separate questionnaires. The findings show that university teaching and student learning in Ethiopia face considerable challenges originated from different sources of influences, including input, process, and outcome dimensions. As the study participants reported, they faced high challenges in teaching and learning mainly due to the shortage of required inputs and processes. The role of pedagogical practices and learning experiences within universities' quality measurement and developing strategies to use such data for continuous quality improvement are discussed.

Keywords: Ethiopia, Learning experience, Pedagogical practice, University.

1. Introduction

Quality is one of the serious concerns of many Higher Education (HE) systems throughout the world as the need to maintain standards, the essence of HE for the masses, and a growing climate of accountability have increasingly intensified institutional and national interests since the mid-1980s (Goastellec, 2008; Wawrzynski, Heck, & Remley, 2012; Xerri, Radford, & Shacklock, 2018). While the two most widely used quality assessment practices are quality assurance and institutional ranking, these approaches suffer from lack of theoretical reasons for actions and evidence of relevance in impacting the HE academe (Hazelkorn, 2017; Holmes, 2010). For example, the focus in quality assurance is primarily on accountability, instead of a real concern for quality improvement (Ewell, 2009). Also, its process is commonly top down, imposed by a university management or by an external quality assurance body (Westerheijden, 2007), and this is mainly meant for the rhetorical confirmation

of fitness for purpose (Taousanidis & Antoniadou, 2010). Through the process, the views of academics, students and others who are positioned as the affected are totally ignored (Tadesse, 2015).

Moreover, what constitutes fitness and the effects of quality assurance on students learning and development are rarely clear (Houston, 2008). Coupled with this, the link between accountability mechanisms and quality improvement remain unclear, even if the concept of continual improvement is implicit in the quality assurance processes (Zepke, 2015).

The other quality assessment scheme, the global ranking of HE institutions, is conducted based on resources and reputation (Huang, 2012). The underlying assumption is that quality is a direct function of institutional resources and reputations (Aguillo, Bar-Ilan, Levene, & Ortega, 2010). Such global rankings like the research rankings by Shanghai Jiao Tong University and the composite rankings by the Times HE Supplement are popular. The assessments for these global rankings typically use various measures of subjectively judged reputation and institutional reported educational and human resources to form a weighted composite score (Bookstein, Seidler, Fieder, & Winckler, 2010)..

In the developed countries context, particularly North America, Australasia, and the UK, student engagement for learning is one of the most important tools for evidence-based quality improvement (Coates & Mahat, 2014; Coates & Seifert, 2011; Kahu, 2013; Kuh, 2009). In recent years student engagement has received considerable international attention and many higher education systems invested considerable resources to incorporating student engagement surveys into their quality measures and further improvement plans (Zepke & Leach, 2010).

Studies show that quality assurance and national university ranking exercises have become common approaches in the Ethiopian HE system (Tadesse, 2015). Nevertheless, the impact of these approaches on the institutional academic culture are not distinctly recognized (Tadesse, Manathunga, & Gillies, 2018c). Moreover, there has been little analysis of the learning experiences of undergraduate students in Ethiopia, and the institutional practices and conditions that foster student success (Zerihun, Beishuizen, & Van Os, 2012). This study provides empirical evidence that highlights teachers' pedagogical practices and students' learning experiences and demonstrates the level of perceived learning students gained as a result. More specifically, this study finds answers to the following research questions.

1. What are the teachers' pedagogical practices and students' learning experiences in the undergraduate program in an Ethiopian university setting?
2. To what extent do undergraduate students and their teachers have similar understandings of what engages students in the HE setting and what they have gained as a result?

2. Methods

2.1. Study Design

We employed a cross-sectional survey design to gain insight into the nature and use of teachers' pedagogical practices and students' learning experiences during the undergraduate years at a University in Ethiopia. We viewed perceptions and experiences as the main ingredients requiring exploration and understanding.

2.2. Study Participants

2.2.1. Student Participants

The fieldwork of this research was conducted in the 2011/12 academic year. The participants included undergraduate students (second year and above) in the College of Natural Sciences and College of Social Sciences and Law at Jimma University, Ethiopia. During sampling, the authors made special consideration to provide a representative sample within each participating college. They achieved this through a stratified random sampling scheme, in which each class of a department is a cluster, involving proportional samples of students from each year-level and gender. The final sample

included undergraduate student participants 536 (107 Women and 429 Men), of whom, 206 were in the college of Natural Sciences and 330 in the College of Social Sciences and Law. Student participants were predominately men (n = 429) with a mean age of 21.44 and a standard deviation of 1.35.

2.2.2. Teacher Participants

This study involved teacher participants (n = 89). Of these participants, 45 were in the college of Natural Sciences and the other 44 in the College of Social Sciences and Law. Participants (n = 89) were predominately male (92%) with female participants accounting for the remaining 8%. The average age was 31.14 with a standard deviation of 6.65. In terms of academic qualification and academic rank, most of the participants had a master's degree and a lecturer position, respectively. The participants teaching experience is broad, ranging between 1 and 25 years of experience with an average of five years teaching experience.

2.3. Measures

This study employed quantitative survey data from a PhD research project of the corresponding author that draws on selected questions from two separate questionnaires distributed to samples of students (n= 536) and teachers (n=89). One questionnaire asked students about their perceptions of learning experiences and the resulted gains. Similarly, the other questionnaire asked teachers about the pedagogical practices they have been through and some selected student learning experiences and behaviors that were demonstrated in their students learning, and how important the teachers thought these were to students.

Data from the students sample have been published elsewhere (Tadesse & Gillies, 2017; Tadesse, Gillies, & Campbell, 2018b; Tadesse, Manathunga, & Gillies, 2018a). However, the published articles and this paper completely differ. While the published articles emphasized on the development and validation of the instrument to reveal its psychometric properties and measurement invariance, this paper focuses on the learning experience of the students from a comparative perspective.

2.4. Data Analysis and Presentations

The collected data from the teacher and student participants are systematically organized across different areas of academic concerns. We analyzed the data mainly using descriptive statistics. We also used t tests, merging comparative data from the students and teachers' perspectives when appropriate. Prior to the main analyses, the researchers used expert review and pilot testing to identify the validity and confirm the reliability of the questionnaires used as indicators of quality in the university studied.

3. Results

3.1. Teacher Participants' Workload

The teacher's professional commitment and time spent facilitating students learning matters most for a high-quality student outcome. The teachers weekly teaching load and the number of students taught per semester can potentially affect the amount of a teacher's time spent advising and engaging other academic related functions. With the intention of identifying these factors, the teacher participants in this study were asked, through the questionnaire, to provide information in relation to these. Figure1 presents the responses obtained from the teachers' participants.

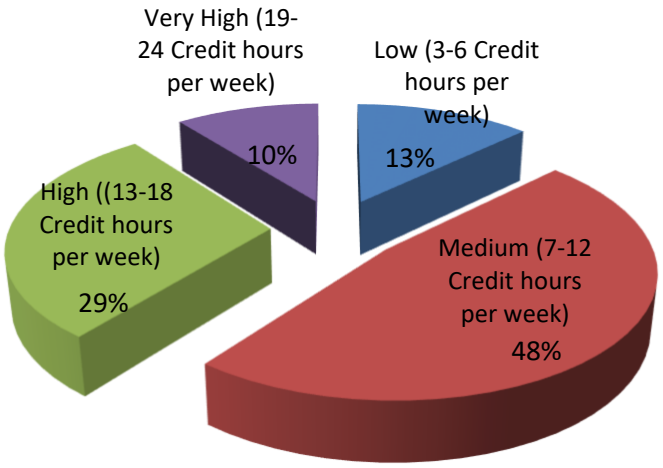

Figure 1. The Proportion of Teachers' Workload Distribution

As shown in Figure 1, 48% of the participant teachers had medium weekly teaching load ranging 6-12 Credit hours per week. Thirty percent of the participants had a high weekly teaching load ranging between 13-18 Credit hours per week. The other 13% had a low weekly teaching load ranging between 3-6 Credit hours per week. The remaining 10% of the participants had a very high weekly teaching load ranging between 19-24 Credit hours per week. Similarly, the number of students taught per semester varied between 38-570 students. Figure 2 illustrates the percentage distributions of the teacher participants across the different levels of student teacher ratios.

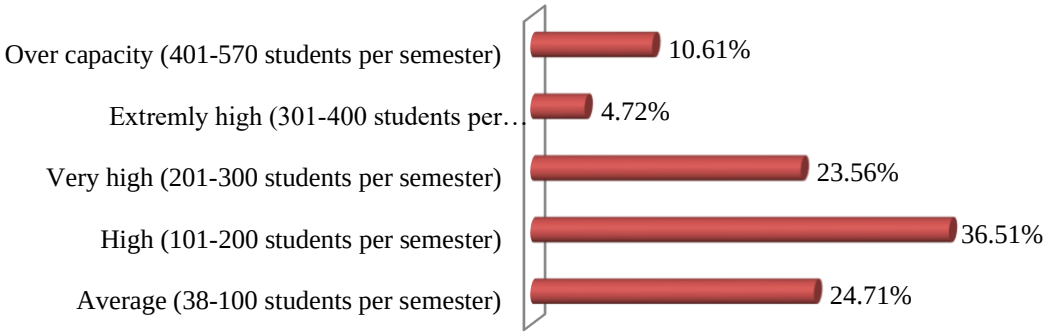

Figure 2. Number of students taught per semester as per the teacher participants responses

As shown in Figure 2, only 25% of the participant teachers had taught an average number of students per semester. The other 60% of the participants had taught high and very high number of students. While the other 5% of the participants had taught extremely high number of students per semester, another 10% of the teacher participants had taught an exceptionally high number of students that would be almost beyond their capacity to manage per semester.

3.2. Teachers' Pedagogical Practices

There is mounting evidence on the potential use of active and collaborative learning methods in helping students' learning experience and achieving higher learning success. For these to happen, teacher's pedagogical repertoire is crucial as this provides information on the pedagogies that address not only disciplinary knowledge but also a range of 'graduate attributes', including generic skills, such as communication and problem-solving skills. With the intent to map out participant teachers' pedagogic practice and measure their routine instructional activities, teacher participants of this study were asked, through the questionnaire, to identify their extent of involvement in different pedagogical activities. Figure 3 presents the summary results obtained from the teacher participants.

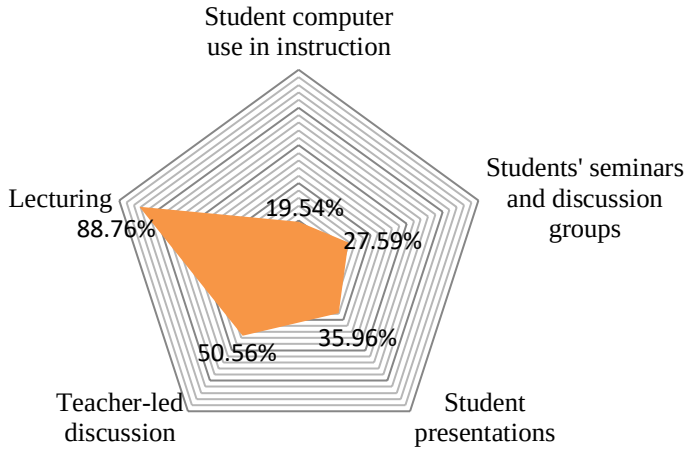

Figure 3. Teaching methods used in regular teaching

As shown in Figure 3, the proportion of participant teachers who used lecturing most often and always is relatively higher than the proportion of participants who used other methods of instruction. This indicates the relative high utilization of lecture compared with participant teachers' usage of other pedagogical approaches, even to usage of teacher-led discussions. Contrary to this, however, participant teachers' utilization of computer-based instruction and making use of students' presentations and seminars are relatively smaller with the proportion of almost 19-35% of the participants having experienced most often and always. A similar analysis to the teachers' assessment strategies produced the following pattern illustrated in Figure 4.

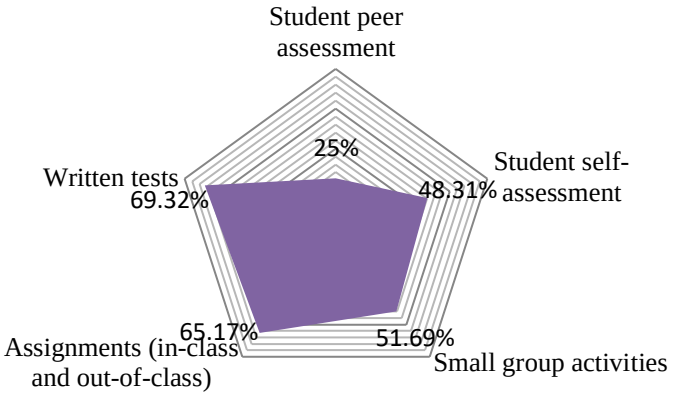

Figure 4. Assessment startegies used in regular teaching

As shown in Figure 4, teacher participants most often used written tests, exams, and assignment (both in-class and out-of-class). Compared with other forms of assessments, usage of peer assessment is relatively minimal or inadequate as only 25% were used regularly. With the intent to understand more about the participants' extent of lecturing across the colleges, a further analysis was undertaken on the distribution of participant's scores. Figure 5 presents summary of the results.

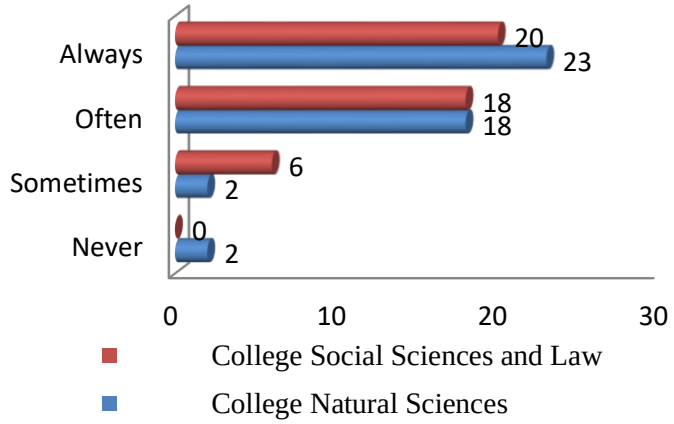

Figure 5. The proportion of participant teachers reported using lecturing across colleges

As shown in Figure 5, the proportion of the participant teachers' who reported using lecturing quite often and always were comparably higher both in the College of Natural Sciences and College of Social Sciences and Law. Contrary to this, quite a few participant teachers used lecturing very rarely, only about 10% of the participants used lecturing sometimes or never. In general, this data show that lecturing is quite common across both colleges. In terms of accomplishing professional responsibilities, the data show several components. These responsibilities are professional requiring teachers to behave professionally. Figure 6 highlights the summary of the result.

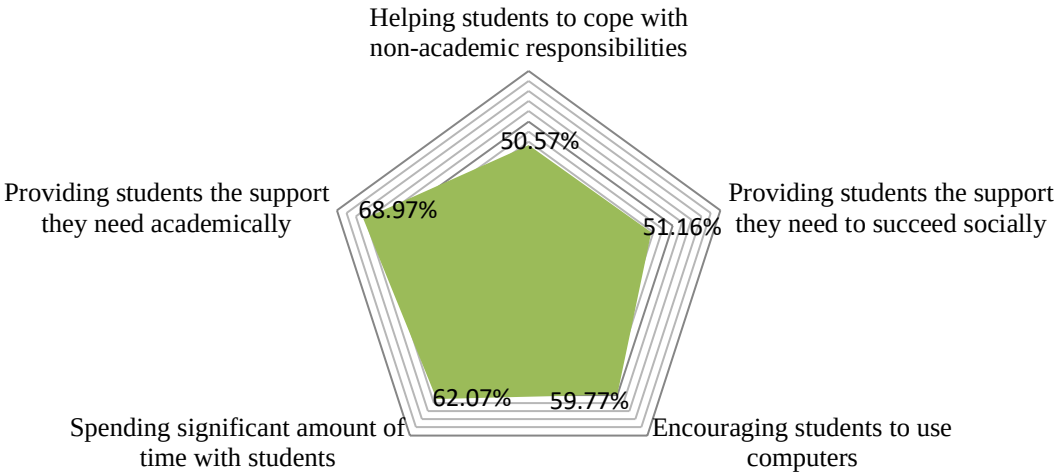

Figure 6. Teacher participants professional roles other than teaching and the propotions of teachers regularly in those roles

As shown in Figure 6, 50-70% of the teachers' participants spend their professional times on various tasks which in support students to engage more academically and succeed in personal and social life. Of the different professional roles, most teachers (68.97%) provide students with the support they need academically. Moreover, 62.07% of the teacher participants spend significant amount of their professional time with the students and 59.77% of them reported that they encourage their students to use computers for the learning purposes. However, a relatively smaller proportion of the teacher participants (51%) reported that they support their students to cope with non-academic responsibilities and succeed socially.

3.3. Interpersonal Relationships

Students perform better and are more satisfied when they learn at a HE institution, which is more committed to their success, and can cultivate positive working and social relations among different groups on campus. Questions addressing the quality of interpersonal relationships were included in the survey questionnaire to get the sense of interpersonal relationships in the institution. Figure 7 illustrates the summary of the result.

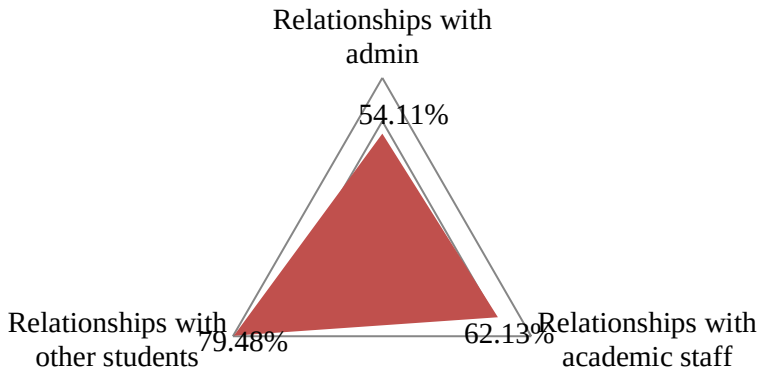

Figure 7. Student participants interpersonal relationship in the university

As illustrated in Figure 7, student participants most commonly interact with their fellow students (79.48%) than their teachers and administrative staff. Relatively speaking, most student participants are more likely to interact with their teachers than the administrative staff. Similarly, student participants were asked to rate the level of support they received during their stay in the university. Figure 8 presents summary of the result.

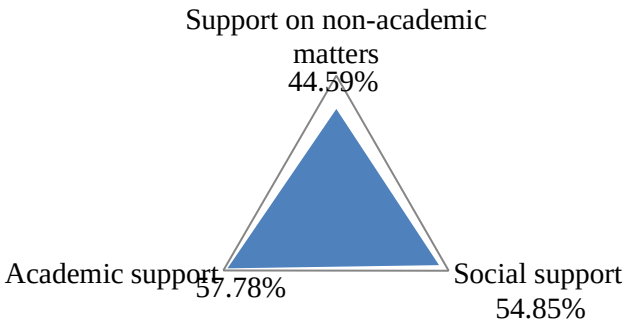

Figure 8. Supports most commonly recieved by the students participants during thier undergraduate years

As shown in Figure 8, When asked about the type of support student participants most received in their undergraduate years, 55-58%% of them reported that they received academic and social supports. However, receiving support on non-academic matters was not common practice for most students with only 44.59% reporting that they received support. Overall, students received moderate a level of support on matters related to their academic and personal life.

3.4. Students Learning Motivations

Teacher participants were also asked about the level of motivation of their students towards learning. Figure 9 presents a summary of the teachers' responses.

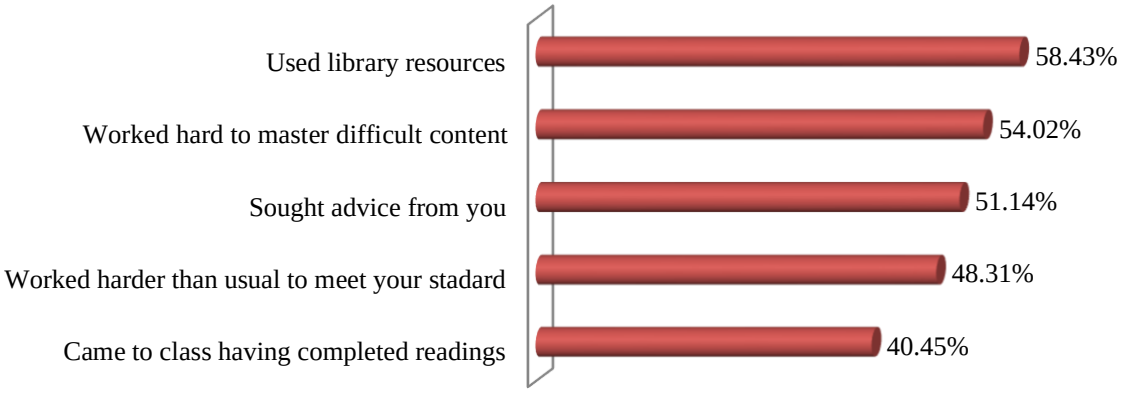

Figure 9. Students learning motivation as viewed by teachers participants

As shown in Figure 9, a little above 50% of the teacher participants of this study (51-58%) believed that most of the undergraduate students in their respective colleges regularly used library resources, worked hard to master content, and sought advice from them. While close to 50% perceived that most of the students sought advice from them, only 41% confirmed that most of the students came to class having completed the required readings. This implies that, nearly 50% of the students them did not complete reading tasks before class.

3.5. Students' Participation in Active and Collaborative Learning Activities

Students' participation in learning activities both in class and outside the class provide them with the opportunity to be intensely involved in learning and to use the opportunity to think about their learning and its application in real-life settings. A higher education institution that offers many different opportunities inside and outside the classroom that enrich students learning provides invaluable exposure for them to acquire new skills, attitudes, and dispositions. Students learning experience in active and collaborative learning activities provide them with the opportunity to gain valuable skills that prepare them to deal with unprecedented problems they will encounter daily during and after college. Student participants of this study were asked about their level of learning experience in active and collaborative learning activities. Figure 10 presents the participant students participation rates.

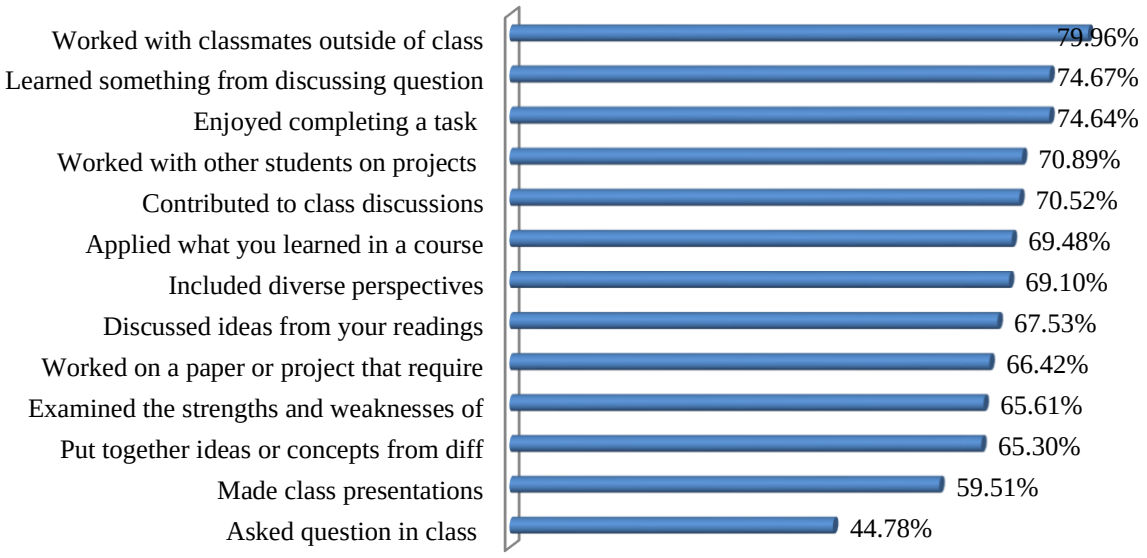

Figure 10. Students participation in active and colaborative learning

As shown in Figure 10, the participant students were involved in active and collaborative learning in several ways with participation rates ranging from 44.78% to 79.96%. The highest rated learning experience was 'working with classmates outside of class' and the lowest rated was 'asking a question in class'. A relatively higher proportion of the students (75-80%) had experience in working with other classmates outside the class, discussing questions, and completing tasks. On the contrary, both asking questions in class and giving presentations were rated relatively lower than other indicators suggesting that not many of the students had experience involving active and collaborative learning activities. Regardless of this, however, a moderately high proportion of the student participants (65-71%) experienced several other active and collaborative learning activities including discussing ideas, applying learned materials in a course, putting together ideas or concepts, working on a paper or project where they had to consider the diverse perspectives of others, and examining the strengths and weaknesses of ideas and concepts that were presented.

3.6. Student-Teacher Interaction

Student-teacher interaction yields positive results when teachers are available to students, being responsive to their educational needs and career interests, and helping them develop as independent thinkers and problem solvers (Santoro, 2011). In this study, student and teacher participants were asked about their interaction experiences. Table 11 presents summary of their responses on this matter.

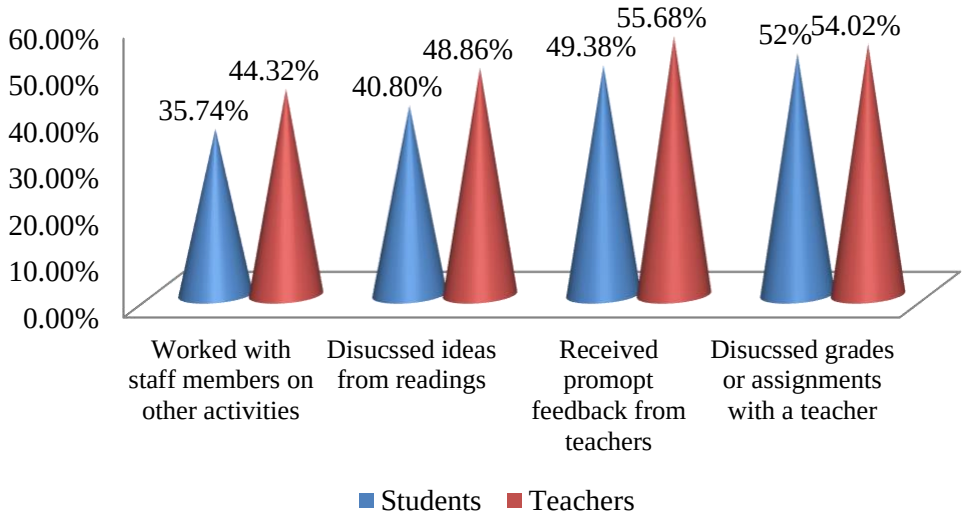

Figure 11. Student-teacher interaction pattern.

As shown in Figure 11, the student-teacher interaction pattern shows that students used to have relatively better interaction with teachers in relation to grades and receiving feedbacks. However, the student teacher interaction in terms of working together on committees and other administrative works as well as discussing ideas from readings seem relatively minimal. Regardless of this however, both students and teachers in this study perceived the extent of student teacher interaction in much the same manner, except a for relatively wider difference in perception regarding the discussion of ideas from readings with teachers.

3.7. Academic Challenges (Course-Related)

The areas of learning and intellectual skills and abilities emphasized in undergraduate courses are the building blocks of the students' cognitive development and attainment of affective outcomes. Students and teachers in this study were asked to rate the extent to which the courses they have been through emphasized different areas of knowledge and intellectual skills and abilities. Figure 12 illustrates the proportion of participants who perceived that their courses emphasized these skills and abilities.

Figure 12. Participants perception on the representation of academic challenge in courses

As shown in Figure 12, most of the students and teachers' participants (81%) perceived that their courses mainly emphasized understanding. However, between 64-78% of the participants perceived that their courses emphasized evaluation, synthesis, and application. Thus, it is clear from these results that the emphasis given for higher-order thinking seems relatively smaller compared to superficial learning.

3.8. Emphasis on Reading and Writing (Literacy)

Reading and writing represent the ability that a student must locate, manage, and use information effectively for a range of purposes. Learning to be information literate heavily depends on the ability of the student to experience forms of reading and writing related with the course work and personal interests. Student participants were asked to rate the extent of emphasis given to reading and writing activities in their course work. Figure 13 presents the summary of the result.

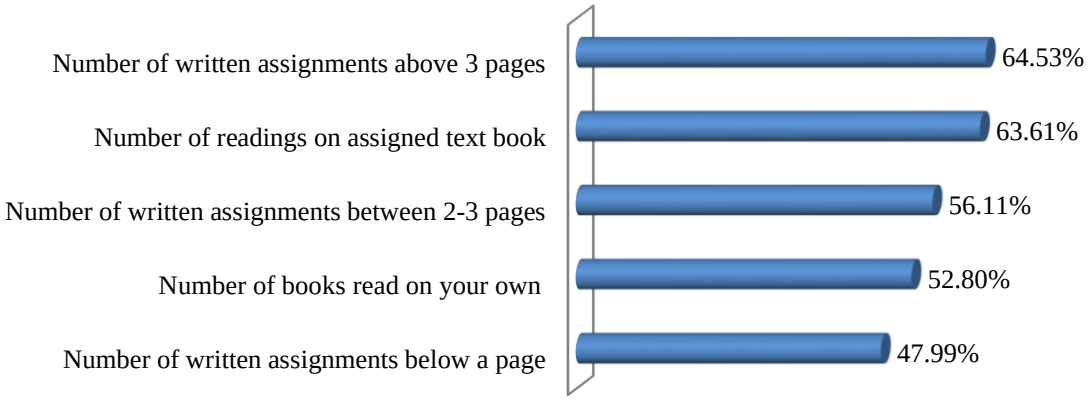

Figure 13. Reading and Writing Activities

As shown in Figure 13, provisions of writing assignments above two pages and readings of assigned textbooks were common experiences compared with the other reading and writing activities. On the contrary, the proportion of the students involved in writing assignments below a page and reading books by their own were relatively small. This result suggests that short writing assignments were not quite common compared with the experience in writing above three pages or reading assigned textbooks. In a similar scenario, the emphasis given for academic challenge in the different assessment tasks was explored. Figure 14 highlights the summary of the teacher participants' responses on the level of challenge sought in assessment tasks.

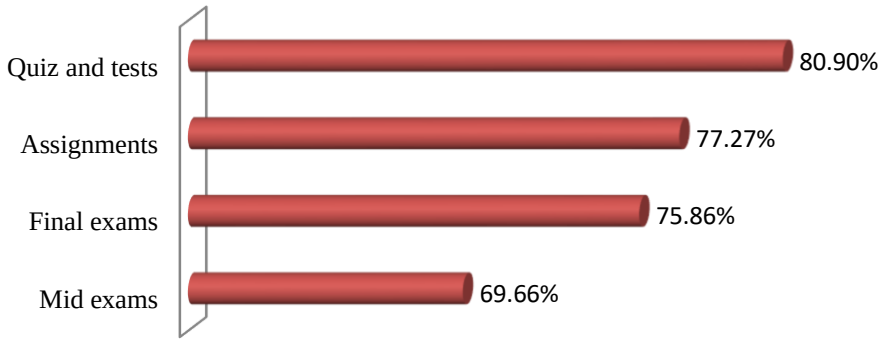

Figure 14. The proportion of teachers participants who rated assessment tasks as level of challange as high and very hgih

As shown in Figure 14, most teacher participants (81%) perceived that the assessment activities in quizzes and tests were reasonably challenging. Likewise, 76% and 77% of the participating teachers perceived the presence of reasonable challenge in final exams and assignments, respectively. Similarly, 70% of them perceived that the presence of reasonable challenge in their final exams. In general, most of the participants perceived that challenge in quizzes and tests as well as assignments were greater than challenges in mid and final exam. This is how teachers felt about the challenges of assessment tasks. Figure 15 presents the summary of the results obtained from the students on the same items.

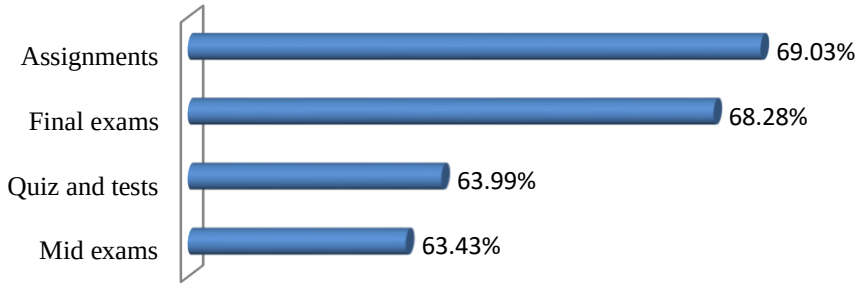

Figure 15. Students ratings on the challenges of assessment tasks

As shown in Figure 15, the proportions of students who rated high academic challenge in assignments and final exams are relatively greater than the proportion of students who rated assessment challenge in quizzes, tests, and mid-exams. This implies that in the views of the student participants, doing assignments and preparing for final exams were challenging for most students compared with the other assessment tasks.

3.9. Perceived Students Learning and Affective Outcomes

Student participants were asked to measure the extent of learning and affective development they have attained because of their experiences in undergraduate education. Similarly, teachers were asked to rate the extent to which most of the students in their respective colleges has attained learning and affective development outcomes. Figure 16 presents the summary of the combined results of the students and the teachers' ratings.

Figure 16. Proprtion of students and teachers participants who reprted that learning and affective development has been achived as a result of undergraduate education

As illustrated in Figure 16, most of the participants (79-90%) perceived higher gains in the general education, personal and professional development, and practical skills. In contrast, learning gains in using computer and information technology, problem solving, analyzing quantitative problems, job-focused knowledge, and aspects of literacy look reasonable because the proportion of participants who rated gains in these areas as well and above were relatively smaller compared with other areas of learning and affective outcomes.

3.10. Differences in Perceptions between Students and Teachers

A further analysis of the students and teacher participants perceived responses to the learning experience and gains measures indicated that they have shared many perceptions. They are similar in their perception regarding many learning experience and self-reported gains items. However, some differences in perception have been identified with varying effect sizes. Table 1 presents the summary of the t test result.

Table 1. Summary statistics for perceived gains differences between student and teacher participants

Variable	Obs=n	*M*		*SD*		Cohen's d
		Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher	
ge2	S 536 T 89	2.94	3.22	0.34	0.78	0.651***
psd2	S 535 T 88	3.52	3.24	0.29	0.81	-0.691***
psd6	S 536 T 89	3.36	3.05	0.31	0.98	-0.664***

Note: m mean, *SD* standard deviation, ge2 general education item 2, psd2 personal and social development item 2, psd6 – personal and social development item 6.
*Significance level. *** p < .001*

Of the different areas of interest, we did compare between students' perception with that of teachers' perceptions of similar items, only these three items presented in Table 1 were found with significance difference between the two groups. Indeed, this needs cautious analysis and interpretations as the number of participants in the two groups did not match. Regardless of this, however, these results could give a mixed answer about the areas where students' and teachers' perceptions mismatch that may stimulate interest to explore other sources and initiate further research.

4. Discussion

This study examined teachers' and students' perceptions of quality teaching and learning by collecting evidences about the pedagogical practices of teachers and the learning experiences of students, and further analyzing matches and mismatches between each group's perceptions. When the results presented in Figure 2 and 3 are compared with the national standards of teaching load 12 hours per week and a student teacher ratio of 1:50, the results, particularly the student-teacher ratios are extremely high for most of the teacher participants (FDRE, 2010; MOE, 2012). This suggests that the participant teachers' professional time is mostly constricted to high teaching loads. Under such conditions the provision of advice for the students and other academic functions may be seriously affected (Atuahene, 2011).

Research shows that the quality of teaching staff is central for the quality of the institution in producing its graduates, its research products, and its service to the institution, community, and nation (Ben-Peretz, 2011; Liandra & Marilda Aparecida, 2010). However, the overburdening of teachers demonstrated in this study with a high teaching load could be one of the potential treats deterring teachers from the other key roles they are expected to offer. This is one of the lingering problems of the HE system in Ethiopia as studies after studies have been consistently identified this as a central problem (Ashcroft & Rayner, 2011; Lodesso, Van Niekerk, Jansen, & Muller, 2014; Van Deuren, Kahsu, Mohammed, & Woldie, 2016). Thus, serious concern about the multiple roles of teachers and their proportional allocation of time and resources towards fulfilling those required academic roles are paramount for the better quality.

When asked about the type of teaching methods they most commonly employed in undergraduate education, 89% of the teacher participants in this study reported that the lecture was their

principal approach to teaching, with many (51%) commonly employing teacher-led discussions. Regardless of this, however, student presentation, small group discussion and seminar, and computer use in instruction, were not common practices for most with only 20-36% reporting extensively using these teaching approaches. Much evidence suggests that Ethiopian HE teachers have been adhering to the notion of descriptive knowledge to their students rather than engaging them in knowledge construction through active learning strategies (Desta, 2004; Fisher & Swindells, 1998; Moges, 2010). The teacher's quality is one of the most important aspects of students' learning experience and learning in HE (Chen, Lattuca, & Hamilton, 2008). The evidence collected in this study, in relation to the pedagogic practice of teachers and students' learning experience in active and collaborative learning suggests that much is still needed to maintain the high standard of education commensurate to the National policy guidelines required to meet the standards of contemporary HE (MOE, 2018).

"Meaningful interactions between students and their teachers are essential to high quality learning experience" (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2011, p. 207). While the evidence in this study shows disproportionate levels of interaction for some academic members, the overall level of interaction seems inadequate with about 40% of the study participants not regularly interacting. Student-teacher interaction either face-to-face (in-class and out-of-class contacts) or using electronic medium needs to be further encouraged (Asabere & Ahmed, 2013). Such interactions are used not only for exchanging information between individual students and their instructors, but also for learning purposes (Sadler, 2012).

Quality improvement is among the most complicated problems facing HE because it touches on almost every aspect of the system (Coates, 2006). It is much more than meeting some minimal standard measures of inputs such as number of the teaching faculty with PhDs, adequacy of books and other learning resources in the library, the ratio of computers to students (Kuh, 2001). If quality improvement is to be carried out effectively it must be seen as important to those involved, and impart critical evidence-base to tertiary institutions, employers, and the public (Strydom, Basson, & Mentz, 2012). Learning experience-based quality assessment is a diagnostic self-assessment and evaluation based on a detailed examination of curricula, structure, and effectiveness of a program as well as the quality and activities of its academic members (Krause, 2005; Kuh, 2009). It is designed to give an institution an evaluation of its own programs based on a sensible data that could help to assess quality in a more meaningful way by taking the core of HE , that is, students learning as the central issue of concern (Ewell, 2010).

Moreover, assuring quality based on student learning experience offers institutions special opportunities to track quality records (Coates, 2005) and build an evidence-base culture (Matthew, Ashleigh, & Christopher, 2012). As Kuh (2003) states, "the benchmarks were created with a blend of theory and empirical analysis" (p. 30). It is believed that these benchmarks offer independent constructs, each representing a domain area that may warrant increased attention. This is more important for the HE institutions in Ethiopia, whose establishment and current internal capabilities do not match with the challenges surrounding its service delivery and academic practices.

Thus, it is suggested that the assessment of quality needs to entail students learning experience as a focal point with a broader conceptualization including the students' efforts and time invested for learning and what the institutions has made to create conditions and learning opportunities (Kuh, 2009). This is more comprehensive, to see the whole picture of quality in the institution as the quality determinants are broadly considered. This allows institutions to monitor and track the educational experiences of their students and assess their learning progress before completion of their undergraduate program. In effect, it is a formative quality assessment tool (Ewell, 2009). Additionally, this assessment provides an educationally grounded mechanism that facilitates comparisons with peer institutions (Kuh et al., 2011). Student learning experience-based quality assessment provides the potential to possibly serve as a robust substitute of the university rankings because its focus is on activities actually associated with learning (Pascarella, 2001).

Ethiopian academics must continue to seek to understand and apply specific, well considered, strategies that support quality improvement in learning both in and beyond the classroom. As the finding of this study indicates students learning experiences as well as teachers' pedagogic practices and use of time and resources for quality learning still needs improvement. Students who are disengaged have several negative impacts upon themselves, their teachers, the institutions, and communities. When HE institutions graduate disengaged students, who are incapable or unprepared, the negative consequences

of this deficit of learning experience in learning ripples across industry and society for the generations. Thus, the impact is cyclical extending from the individual up to the institutions, and society at large. If we fail to make changes to our curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment strategies, we fail our students, and the impact of this will be far reaching extending to the world of work and finally jeopardize the future of the society (Tadesse, Manathunga, & Gillies, 2018b; Tadesse & Melese, 2016).

As the finding of this study shows, academic staff focused more on lecturing than using the time for other active and collaborative learning activities (e.g., increase group-discussion time). However, today's world absolutely requires collaborative critical thinkers, creative and courageous innovators, and true lifelong learners (Marginson, 2007). The development of these essential competencies depend on the learning experience students had during their school years, and colleges and universities have one of the most important contributions (Coates, 2005).

In this contemporary time, reading and writing is considered as one of the most important ´generic skills´ which allows people to engage in effective decision–making, problem solving and research (Zylka, Christoph, Kroehne, Hartig, & Goldhammer, 2015). It also enables them to take responsibility for their own continued learning in areas of personal or professional interest (Šorgo, Bartol, Dolničar, & Boh Podgornik, 2017). There seems less attention paid to these essential skills as the evidence in this study highlighted. Thus, future efforts to improve the quality need to focus on such fundamental issues. How can we improve quality teaching and learning in HE? The themes and ideas that surface most often in the literature are: embedded collaboration (Squires, 2009), integrated technology (Fu, 2013), inquiry-based learning, assessment for learning (Siham, 2012; Willis, 2010), making learning interdisciplinary and relevant to real life (Nikitina, 2006). Significant changes in teaching and learning are possible, particularly when interactive technologies are involved (Tadesse, Gillies, & Campbell, 2018a).

5. Conclusions

This study demonstrates that quality assessment based on the learning processes and outcomes provide comprehensive and more reliable empirical evidence (Strydom et al., 2012). This trend is recognized as critical in many countries around the globe. Overall, there was a strong message that the university studied needs to focus on improving teaching and learning. Student and teacher participants highlighted several issues of concern. Most of the participating teachers viewed their teaching activities and the corresponding learning efforts made by the undergraduate students as needing much improvement. They reported giving less concern to active and cooperative learning pedagogies and serious drawbacks of engaging students more in courses and assessment tasks. Student participants on their part had some concerns over the reduced level of their learning experiences, the overall academic tradition and institutional concern for quality.

The lack of supportive evidence in improving teaching practices and students learning experiences is one of the very reasons that created blurred linkage between the essence of quality assurance and university ranking and their corresponding benefits for quality improvement (Harvey, 2008; Huisman & Westerheijden, 2010). While the Ethiopian quality assurance and the national university rankings are visible parts of the overarching HE transformation, and prime concerns to maintain and safeguard quality (Teshome & Kebede, 2010), the evidences presented in this study highlighted that these have little influence on the quality of teaching, assessment practices, and learning conditions. Re-conceptualizing quality and looking for a new paradigm for a tangible quality improvement is crucial.

6. Implications

It should be clear at the outset that, motivating undergraduate students for learning requires an understanding of their self-efficacy beliefs, their concerns and cares, and the tasks that encourage them to work hard to learn (Krumrei-Mancuso, Newton, Kim, & Wilcox, 2013; Maclellan, 2008). To be good at teaching, university teachers need several kinds of knowledge about undergraduate students learning. For example, university teachers need to know what it means to learn different kinds of material for

different purposes, and how to decide which kinds of learning are most necessary in different contexts (Chi, Liu, & Bai, 2017; Tseng, Gardner, & Yeh, 2016). Moreover, they must be able to use different teaching strategies for different purposes (Kinsella, Mahon, & Lillis, 2017), and many ways and means for evaluating students' learning (Gezie, Khaja, Chang, Adamek, & Johnsen, 2012). A mere usage of lecture and paper-and-pencil tests play very little in the development of students' knowledge, skills and affective outcomes (Wang, 2012). University teachers must be able to identify the strengths of different pedagogic approaches while addressing their weaknesses (Roksa, Trolian, Blaich, & Wise, 2017). In addition, university teachers need further pedagogical tools to work effectively with students who have specific learning needs.

Above all, because literacy, particularly ICT literacy is the main gateway to learning in this modern era, university teachers must understand how students acquire reading and writing skills and ICT literacy skills more broadly (Hatlevik, Throndsen, Loi, & Gudmundsdottir, 2018; Wilson, Scalise, & Gochyyev, 2015), so that they can build literacy skills and create accessible learning experiences that are relevant to effectively function in this 21st century (Zylka et al., 2015).

University teachers need to know about educational resources and technologies that are readily available to connect their students with sources of information and knowledge (Hockings, Thomas, Ottaway, & Jones, 2018), allowing them to become independent learners through exploring ideas, acquiring and synthesizing information, and framing and solving problems (Adedokun-Shittu & Shittu, 2015). In addition, university teachers need to know about cooperation—how to structure interactions among students so that more powerful shared, learning can occur (Tadesse & Gillies, 2015; Tadesse, Gillies, & Manathunga, 2020). In addition, they need to know the interconnectedness of university teaching, so that it is necessary to collaborate with other university teachers; and to shape supportive experiences at university (Premo, Cavagnetto, & Lamb, 2018).

Furthermore, university teachers need to be able to engage in analyzing and reflecting on their practices , assess the effects of their teaching on students learning, and other related outcomes, and to refine and improve their instruction from time to time (Ann, Sven De, David, & Peter Van, 2013). They must continuously evaluate what students are understanding and redesign their plans based on what they have discovered (Gedamu et al., 2018).

The development and use of teaching knowledge and pedagogical practice requires learning opportunities for university teachers that are more powerful than simply attending a training session, followed by reading and talking about new pedagogical ideas (Webster-Wright, 2009). Instead, university teachers learn best by authentic experiences (Webster-Wright, 2010), including studying, doing, and reflecting; collaborating with other university teachers; and looking closely at students and their work (Margalef, Margalef, & Pareja Roblin, 2016). There is a growing interest, in relation to this, through community of practice or learning community models (Arthur, 2016; Hilliard, 2012), and this need to be the prime focus for teacher professional development in universities in Ethiopia and beyond.

The learning of teaching knowledge cannot occur in college classrooms detaching from practice. A conducive institutional environment provide lots of opportunities for trying and evaluating the results of learning and teaching (Tennant, McMullen, & Kaczynski, 2010). The crossroad between theory and practice occurs most productively when questions arise in the context of actual teaching and learning, and where research and disciplined inquiry are also a part.

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