

English Teachers' Preferences of Professional Development Activities in Four Secondary Schools of Gurage Zone

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study was to assess EFL teachers' preferences of Professional Development activities. To achieve this, descriptive survey design with both quantitative and qualitative approach was employed. The subjects of the study were thirty one EFL teachers, four CPD facilitators, four school principals and four supervisors from four secondary schools. Census method for EFL teachers and purposive sampling for CPD facilitators, school principals and supervisors were used as sampling techniques. Questionnaire, FGD and EFL teachers' CPD document analysis were employed as data collection instruments. Data obtained from questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as: frequency, percentages and mean while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings indicated that the majority of EFL teachers preferred short-term trainings and workshops as their CPD activity. It is concluded the existing teachers' CPD activity needs re-designing to meet teachers' preferences. The study also indicated that there is no follow up and evaluation mechanisms on teachers' CPD. CPD activities should be connected to teachers' appraisal and career development.

KEY WORDS: preferences, professional development, school-based mentoring, trainings & workshops

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I. INTRODUCTION

The world of teaching is changing very fast. Due to this change, many old teaching methods have been rejected and new ones are introduced. To keep up with the change in the methodologies of teaching, curriculums and teacher education programs keep on continuously changing and developing. Therefore, English language teachers should keep abreast of the new changes in the field of education and language teaching. This type of learning is often referred to as professional development as it aims to enhance the teacher's professional competence and efficiency.

Continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers has existed for several decades and become an important subject in teacher education reform in the world. It consists of all natural learning, experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school and which contribute to the quality of education in the classroom [1]. This implies that CPD encompasses formal and informal means of developing teachers professionally and a wide variety of approaches in a variety of settings.

Professional development for teachers takes many forms ranging from top down formal training programs to teacher initiated development activities. One of the differences between professional development and pre-service teacher education is that student teachers have to learn and show evidence of learning and improvement, while in-service teachers' learning and training can be voluntary. Some teachers may seek to develop and to learn more about teaching while others may be quite satisfied with their current knowledge and resist continuous learning. Some teachers may pursue professional development just to follow school plans or requirements of teachers. As there are differences between teachers' plans of ongoing learning, there are also differences between schools' and institutions' plans and policies for the professional development of teachers.

Continuous professional development is critical to developing and maintaining high quality teachers [2]. Nowadays most EFL teachers are criticized in producing incompetent and unconfident students. So to meet the diversified need of students, EFL teachers are expected to participate in professional development activities.

One of the means to ensure teachers' quality is to engage them in lifelong learning. Teacher as a lifelong learner seems to be the best way to ensure ongoing professional development. This continuous professional development is a key to students' achievement. Self-motivation, willingness to learn and constant practice are the characteristics of a successful language learner. An intellectually engaged teacher can inculcate these characteristics in students and guide the students better through the process of acquiring language [3].

To ensure long term and ongoing professional development, teachers have many opportunities like attending trainings, participating in workshops, presenting at seminars and conferences, updating oneself with the new techniques and practices, reading journals, conducting classroom research, discussion with colleagues, becoming member of teaching communities, etc.

Many scholars stated that English language teachers' professional development is the backbone of successful language teaching.

In Ethiopia, according to the [4], following pre-service and induction professional training, each teacher and instructor has a professional, personal and civic responsibility to undertake continuous professional development throughout his or her career. In each school, teachers must take part in planned CPD activities for minimum of sixty hours each year. This may demand teachers' relentless commitment to engage in CPD activities since teachers' continuous professional development has direct linkage to educational quality improvement holistically and improvement in the students learning achievement particularly.

The Ethiopian education and training policy has given due attention to teachers education. Teachers starting from kindergarten to higher education needs to have the necessary teaching qualification and competency in the media of instruction through pre-service & in-service training, professional ethics and teaching performance, [5] Even though, so much efforts have been made in the education and training of teachers both in colleges and schools, yet it is abundantly clear that this effort has been largely ineffective in that it has not been matched by significant changes in the classroom practice of most teachers throughout the country [6]. To change this condition, CPD is designed as one of the most important programs, which is currently operating in all schools in the country.

Teachers continuous professional development is one of the major factors required in advancement of the quality and professionalism of teachers. Teachers do not enter class as finished products, hence, they need their continuing professional development. This means that pre-service training doesn't equip teachers with necessary skills and knowledge they need to be effective and efficient in their work. It is through practice, experience, assistance and more training that novice teachers can learn and improve to become better teacher [7]. The current Ethiopian teachers' professional development activities arise from the top (the school) and then teachers are expected to conduct at least two of the CPD titles that their schools preferred out, of the three modules which teachers are expected to do every year. This approach seems one-size-fits all (top-down) [8]. Regarding this, [9] describe that teachers' professional development activities must adopt bottom-up approach, where the starting point is an internal view (arising from the teachers themselves) of teaching rather than an external one (imposed on them by the school). A top-down approach may leave the teachers feeling that they have no real personal investment to the program and they may therefore be less committed to it. This approach makes the professional development of teachers' intellectually superficial, disconnected from deep issues pertaining to the curriculum and learning, and causes it to be fragmented [10].

Many researches were conducted on the effectiveness of the current Ethiopian teachers' professional development. Among these, [11] shows that the implementation of CPD program in secondary schools of Gurage zone were weak, this research also shows CPD activities like teachers' involvement in curriculum meeting, action research, maintaining portfolio conference and workshop were below expectation. The research conducted by [12] shows that lack of teachers' interest, shortage of time for the course, and school leaders' attention to the program were among the factors that challenged the implementation of school CPD of teachers. The other research conducted by [13] identified work load, lack of recognition from stakeholders and inadequate in-service training as challenges of CPD implementation.

This is supported by strong evidence from the reports of MOE in its ESDP IV document. The report clearly shows that teachers did not really engage in continuous professional development activities to extent that could induce improvement in their competence and skill [6].

Thus, the reason as to why teachers' do not participate actively in CPD is not well investigated. It is also not known whether teachers have preferences to certain types of CPD activities. Having this in mind, this study attempted to address the following research questions:

The study attempts to investigate the following basic questions.

1. Do EFL teachers prefer school-based mentoring as their professional development activities?

2. Do short-term trainings and workshops preferred by EFL teachers as their professional development activities?
3. Do EFL teachers prefer engagement in reflective practice as their CPD?
4. What other professional development activities do EFL teachers prefer?
- 5.

II. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Professional development is an ongoing process of assessment and planned actions that provide the opportunity for maintaining and expanding knowledge and skills based on evidence, self-reflection about and facilitation of professional core values and autonomous practice within the context of one's practice setting. Different scholars define professional development differently. Among these: [14] defines professional development as processes and activities that assist educators in building their knowledge and skills, which will in turn improve students learning, and [15] defines as the sum total of formal and in formal learning experiences throughout teachers career from pre-service teacher education to retirement.

From the above two definitions of professional development, it is possible to understand that learning will occur in formal and informal ways. This conception of professional development (PD), thus, challenges the traditional, training focused approach of teachers learning that gives more emphasis to formal learning. In current global education practices, the emphasis on the utilization of both formal and informal learning of professional development has become even strengthened.

Professional development is an activity that develops individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher and it is concerned with helping teachers in order to grow and develop teachers understanding of teaching and learning process continuously so as to improve the profession. Therefore, in order to make a teaching learning activity more effective and to improve instructional practices, pedagogy and student outcomes formal and informal professional development are essential for teachers as well as instructional leaders. Professional development encompasses the entire scope of one's career beginning with professional education and continuing through one's professional life span. In this regard, teaching should be regarded as a profession.

Professional development involves career long processes and related systems and policies designed to enable teachers, supervisors and school supervisors to acquire, broaden and deepen their knowledge, skills and commitment in order to effectively perform their work. The stage of professional development for teachers has been characterized as consisting of pre-service, induction and in-service program.

[16]) professional development policies define the regulation, standard, assessment procedures and resources for

- ✚ The provision of pre-service, induction and in-service program.
- ✚ The recruitment, retention, evaluation and promotion of educators.



Figure 1: Stages of professional development.

Source: professional development by [16]

Professional development is the process where skills and knowledge an employee gains to maximize his/her personal development and job growth. The opportunities involved in career development can range from workshop attendance, to entire semester/years of academic courses, to different services provided by various development providers.

In general, professional development opportunities take many forms but all share the basic goal to show that the strategies and solutions for doing their job more successfully in an efficient and effective way to the participant

Effective professional development enables educators to develop the knowledge and skills they need to address students' learning challenges. To be effective, professional development requires thoughtful planning followed by careful implementation with feedback to ensure that it responds to educators' learning needs. Educators who participate in professional development then must put the knowledge and skills they obtain from professional development program to their daily practices.

Professional development is not effective unless it enables teachers to improve their instruction or support instructional leaders to become better professionals, [17]. This shows that effective professional development help teachers to improve their classroom performance which results in the improvement of the students' outcome.

Besides from the individual satisfaction or financial gain that teachers may obtain as a result of participating in professional development program, the process of professional development program has a significant positive impact on teachers' beliefs, practice, students' learning and on the implementation of educational program.

Teachers play an important role in their classrooms; therefore, these professional competence and continuous development is inevitable [2]. Teachers are the main source of knowledge and guidance to their students, so their continuous professional development and learning is vital for their continuous contribution to the learning & development of their students.

Professional development activities and programs help teachers to be informed of the latest additions in their fields and enhance their career development opportunities as well as prevent burnout [15]. Because of the clear advantages of professional development for teachers, institutions, and students, it is important to provide teachers with well-planned and relevant professional development programs. Opportunities for participation in in-service training and professional development activities need not only to be made available for teachers but also to be up-to-date, varied, and realistic.

In addition to this, many literatures suggest that, TDP's role in equipping teachers about how students learn, the decisions that the teachers passes, the approach of class room management the teachers employ is very important.

Another aspect of teachers' professional development is the goals or aims that make individual teachers or educational institutions engage in professional development activities. One most agreed upon goal and aim of continuing professional development and learning of teachers is improvement of the education and learning opportunities for students [19]. In addition to improving students learning, professional development for teachers aims at changing and improving the current practices, notions, knowledge and opinion to make them reach the required standards.

Different literature reveals that there is no single best approach to professional development. Rather, it is preferable for multiple approaches to be integrated with one another and address the complex and dynamic characteristics of specific program contents and learner needs. Success rests on finding the optimal combination of approaches for different situations. Different scholars identified various approaches to CPD and also recommended different models for different contexts. According to [20], classified approaches to CPD in to three types: direct teaching (such as courses, workshops...), in-school learning (such as peer coaching, critical friends, mentoring, action research and task related planning teams) and out of school learning (such as learning network, visit to other school learning school-university partnership and so on).

Similarly, [14] and [21] listed four major approaches to professional development.

✚ Workshop /Presentation foster acquisition of new skills and knowledge about a topic through direct instruction and participatory activities.

✚ Observation /Feedback provide practitioners with data and feedback regarding their performance.

✚ Inquiry /Research that requires practitioners to reflect upon their daily practices in a systematic and international manner, overtime.

✚ Product /Program development engages practitioners in processes as curriculum development, program enhancement and program improvement.

According to these authors, workshops/presentation may be a first step in the professional development process, particularly if the purpose is to raise awareness among participants regarding new ideas or strategies. A workshop may be a vehicle for introducing practitioners to other approaches to professional development, or it may be jumping off point for refining skills or for further exploring other concepts. Another popularly adopted classification was made by [22]. According to him, approaches to professional development can be classified into two. These are, 'traditional system' and 'standard base system.' The traditional system is usually identified as in-service training. It is designed and controlled by employers. On the other hand, the latter on focuses on local needs, real needs, identified by teachers. Hence, the modern approaches to CPD pay particular attentions to local needs.

Even though, the professional development schools model has variations from setting to settings, all of the models share common goal of producing professional development experiences for both pre-service and in-service teachers in school settings.

University- school partnerships are networks that connect practitioners and institutions of higher education. School networks bring teachers together to address their problems they encountered in the work, and promote their own professional development individually or in groups. Distance education is another organizational partnership model. This involves different programs transmitted through different means such as radio, television and electronic communications, written and recorded materials [22]. Small group or individual

models involve various alternative models including collegial development, observation of excellent practices, portfolio, action research, mentoring, peer observation, team teaching and the like. Regarding this [4], describe that the types/models of CPD programs are various and their practicability depends on the need and interest of schools. In Ethiopian context, the models that are adopted to be employed in schools include both groups

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A. Research design

The purpose of this study was to investigate EFL teachers' preferred professional development activities. To achieve this objective descriptive survey design was used. To this end, mixed research approach that combines quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed.

B. Source of data

Both primary and secondary source of data were used in the study so as to get factual information. Primary data was gathered from all English language teachers of the selected secondary schools, school CPD facilitators, cluster school supervisors and principals through questionnaire, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and document analysis. Secondary data was obtained from English teachers CPD portfolio documents.

C. Participants of the study

In Gurage zone there are 13 Wereda's (the smallest administrative bodies) and 2 Administrative towns. There are 80 public secondary schools in the zone and 118 EFL teachers teach in these schools. For this study, four Wereda's of the zone were selected using simple random sampling method and from each selected Wereda, one secondary school was selected randomly in order to generate a broad range of perception, insight and experience of EFL teachers on their preferences professional development activities.

TABLE 1: BIO-DATA OF RESPONDENTS

No	Name of the schools	Number of EFL teachers in the sample schools			Selected EFL teachers from the sample schools		
		M	F	T	M	F	T
1	Yaberus Secondary and Preparatory school	7	5	12	7	5	12
2	Kebenna Secondary and Preparatory school	3	3	6	3	3	6
3	Holle Secondary and Preparatory school	4	2	6	4	2	6
4	Emdibir Secondary and Preparatory school	2	5	7	2	5	7
TOTAL		16	15	31	16	15	31

D. Methods of Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data, both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis were employed. In both cases, the data with similar categories were grouped into themes and organized in the way that they could be easily analyzed and interpreted.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results of Questionnaire Data

TABLE 2: SCHOOL BASED MENTORING AS EFL TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES (N=31).

No	Items	Alternatives	Frequency	%
1	Do experienced teachers support /help less experienced teachers in your school?	Yes	25	80.64%
		No	6	19.35%
		Not sure	4	16 %
2	If your answer is "yes", to what extent do the experienced teachers support the less experienced ones?	Highly	2	8%
		moderately	13	52%
		Rarely	6	24%
		Not at all	-	
3	Do more qualified teachers support/help less	Yes	18	58.1%

	qualified teachers in your school?	No	11	35.5%
		Not sure	2	6.4%
4	If your answer is "yes", how often do they support/help?	Always	2	11.1%
		Frequently	3	16.66%
		Sometimes	10	55.55%
		Rarely	3	16.66%
		Not at all	-	-

As can be seen from Table 2 item 1, 25(80.64%) respondents replied that experienced teachers support/help inexperienced teachers in their professional development activities. But 6(19.3%) participants responded that experienced teachers do not support inexperienced teachers, the remaining 6(19.35%) were not sure whether experienced teachers support less experienced teachers in their professional development activities. This shows that in the secondary schools understudy, inexperienced EFL teachers had the possibility of getting professional supports from their experienced colleagues; this means that school based mentoring exist in the schools to a certain degree.

Majority of the respondents mentioned that the help less experienced teachers get from experienced teachers is moderate (see Table 2 item 2). This implies that, majority of the participant teachers received help from experienced teachers in their teaching career.

On the other hand, data obtained from open-ended questionnaire showed that some experienced teachers' didn't have interest to support less experienced teachers due to different reasons. These reasons include:

✚ There was no platform in which more experienced teachers support less experienced teachers.

✚ Less experienced teachers are not readily willing to get support from more experienced teachers since they had no awareness on the importance of getting help from senior teachers.

Majority of the respondents agreed that more qualified teachers (i.e. teachers with MA degree, etc.) help less qualified teachers in the schools understudy. Concerning the frequency, majority replied 'sometimes' (See Table 2 item 3 and 4).

TABLE 3: EFL TEACHERS' RESPONSE ON THEIR PARTICIPATION IN REFLECTIVE PRACTICES (N=31)

No	Types of reflective practice	Yes	No	Not sure
1.	Teaching journals	6	24	1
2.	Self-reports (lesson reports)	13	18	-
3.	Action research	25	6	-

As it can be seen from Table 3, majority of the participant teachers (25 out of 31) reported that they participated in action research, considerable number of participants also mentioned writing self- reports or lesson reports (i.e. 13 out of 31) as a reflective practice.

This shows that majority of EFL respondents prefer conducting action research as their reflective practice.

1) *Types of PD activities that EFL teachers prefer to take part*

TABLE 4: EFL TEACHERS' RESPONSES ON TYPES AND FREQUENCY OF SCHOOL BASED MENTORING THAT THEY PREFERRED.

Key: 5=Always		4=Frequently		3= Sometimes		2= Rarely		1= Not at all	
No.	Types of school based mentoring that you preferred to take part in	5	4	3	2	1	Total	Mean	
1.	Getting support from senior teachers	11 (35.5%)	7 (22.6%)	6 (19.35%)	4 (12.9)	3 (9.7%)	31 100	3.62	
2.	Participating in peer coaching	2 (6.2%)	20 (64.5%)	5 (18.13%)	1 (3.2%)	3 (9.7%)	31 100	3.55	
3.	To take part in supervision programs	1 (3.2%)	6 (19.35%)	17 (54.4%)	7 (22.6%)	-	31 100	3.03	
Grand mean								3.43	

Table 4 is on the participants' preference of the types of school based mentoring used for their Professional Development. Accordingly, item 1 is on whether they prefer getting support from senior teachers; majority, (i.e. 58.1 %) responded that they preferred to get support from senior EFL teachers always and frequently and 19.3% participants responded sometimes. Therefore, this implies that the majority of respondent teachers preferred getting support from senior teachers as a school- based mentoring activity.

Item 2 of Table 4 is whether the participant teachers prefer participating in peer- coaching as a school-based mentoring activity. Based on this, the majority (i.e. 22 or 70.7%) participants responded they 'always' and 'frequently' preferred peer-coaching as a school-based mentoring PD activity.

Item 3 of Table 4 is on the teachers' participation in supervision as a school-based mentoring. The majority (i.e. 54.4%) mentioned that they sometimes. The remaining 19.35 % and 3.2 respondent teachers replied 'frequently' and 'always' respectively. The other 22.6% participants replied they rarely participate in supervision activities. This shows that participant teachers involvement in supervision activities as a professional development is not much.

TABLE 5: RESPONSES OF EFL TEACHERS PARTICIPATION ON SHORT TERM TRAININGS AND WORKSHOPS

	5=Always	4=Frequently	3= Sometimes	2= Rarely	1= Not at all		
N	5	4	3	2	1	Total	Mean
Types of short term trainings and workshops that you preferred out to take part							
1. Participating in workshops and short term trainings	8(25.8%)	7(22.6%)	12(38.7%)	4(12.9%)	-	31(100%)	3.61
2. To take part in conferences related to my profession	16(51.6%)	7(22.6%)	5(16.1%)	3(9.7)	-	31(100%)	4.13
Grand mean							3.71

As can be seen from Table 5, item 1, from thirty one respondents, 8(25.8%) mentioned they always prefer to participate in workshops and 7(22.6%) said they frequently prefer to participate in workshops; 12(38.7%) and 4(12.9%) participants pointed out 'sometimes' and 'rarely' prefer to participate in workshops respectively.

Similarly, majority of the respondents 16(51.6%) and 7(22.6%) replied that they 'always' and 'frequently' preferred to take part in conferences related to their profession, while 5(16.1%) and 3(9.7%) pointed out that they 'sometimes' and 'rarely' want to take part in conferences related to the teaching profession.

From this table, we can deduce that majority of EFL teachers preferred workshops and short term trainings. They also preferred to take part in conferences related to their professional.

TABLE 6. RANK ORDER OF PARTICIPANT EFL TEACHERS' PREFERENCES OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

No.	Preferred PD activities	Grand mean	Rank
1	School based mentoring	3.43	2
2	Short term trainings and workshops as Engaging in reflective practices	3.71	1
3	Other PD activities (i.e. personal reading, participating in professional organizations, etc.)	3.09	3
4.	Action Research	1.52	5

As it can be seen from the Table above, participating in short term trainings and workshops were ranked first with grand mean 3.71 followed by school based mentoring and other professional development activities respectively. Engaging in reflective practice was ranked the fourth and participation in action research stood last.

Results of Focus Group Discussion

The focus group discussion was conducted to get the participants idea on the issue under study. The purpose is to involve all stakeholders in the teachers' CPD and to cross- check findings of teachers' questionnaire. The discussion was held based on the following focus areas:

- The professional development activities that English teachers participated in the past two years
- The nature of professional development activities practiced in the schools
- The professional development activities mostly preferred by teachers
- The way forward on the improvement of CPD activities

Accordingly, the data from the discussion revealed that teachers had participated in different types of professional development activities like school based mentoring, different short-term trainings related to the teaching profession, experience sharing, supervising colleagues and the like.

Concerning the nature of professional development activities practiced in the schools, the discussion revealed that professional development activities do not vary from teacher to teacher because the School Improvement Committee (SIP) determines the type and content of the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) do not vary from teacher to teacher. All teachers uniformly study and do the same material regardless of their experience, interest and personal differences.

From this, we can understand that the school administration, together with the Ministry, determine the nature, type and content of the school CPD of teachers'. Teachers had no chance to choose their own PD activities. It is imposed on them without referring to their interest.

One of the important aspects of professional development for teachers is to improve their teaching practice and students result. Thus, it is important for teachers to apply the knowledge that they gained from the program in to their classroom. For this, concerned department heads, CPD committees and school-based supervisors should make regular follow up. But the focus group discussants mentioned that there was no regular follow up by the concerned bodies. They simply check the teachers' port-folio occasionally and did not give feedback.

All FGD participants stipulated that in order to make teachers continuous professional development activities more effective, all stakeholders should play their roles effectively. They further said that CPD should involve teachers at all levels (i.e. from planning to evaluation), School Improvement Committee (SIP) should plan based on teachers interest and preferences. They also mentioned that relatively high point should be given to CPD activities in teachers' career development.

Results of Document Analysis

In order to collect information on EFL teachers' preferences of professional development activities, the researcher produced a checklist which were believed to have an ideal connection to teachers' preferences of PD activities. Sixteen EFL teachers CPD documents (two experienced teachers and two beginner teachers from each sample school) were taken. In order to do this, CPD portfolios done by EFL teachers whose experience ranged from 1-5 years were taken as beginner teachers' portfolio and experience above 5 years were taken as experienced EFL teachers portfolios.

The following were points of the analysis:

- ✚ Whether contents of the portfolio were different from teacher to teacher,
- ✚ Common areas of focus of EFL teachers' portfolio.
- ✚ Evaluation and comments given by responsible persons(mentors, school principal or supervisors) on teachers' portfolio

Accordingly, all the contents of the teachers' portfolio were found to be similar. This shows that the CPD activities were uniform and prescribed. It did not consider the professional need and interest of the participant teachers. It couldn't consider their experiences as well as teachers' of various teaching experience did the same (i.e. they studied the same material prepared by the Ministry of Education). As the analysis of the portfolio of EFL teachers in the selected secondary schools revealed, there are teachers who copied other teachers work directly. From sixteen CPD portfolios taken from four selected secondary schools for analysis, twelve portfolios were directly copied from the previous year's CPD portfolios. This showed that there is duplication of activities from year to year.

The School Improvement Program (SIP), in line with the Ministry, decide the focus of the CPD. The most common activities preferred by the schools' SIP committee were like: improving students' behavior and improving students' achievement by 10%, etc. without mentioning the way and mechanism teachers are supposed to use to improve students result. Above all, the very concept of CPD is on teachers not on students. It is clear that students' achievement will increase when teachers' teaching performance is improved. CPD is on improving teachers' teaching performance.

Concerning Suggestions and comments given to the progress of professional development activities, out of sixteen CPD documents, eleven (68.8%) were neither signed nor stamped by concerned bodies (i.e. CPD facilitators, school principals' or supervisors of the schools), three (18.8%) were stamped without any comment and the remaining two (12.5%) were signed and stamped. This showed that there was no follow up and appropriate comment provision on the progress of teachers' professional development activities.

Discussion of the results

In this section, the data that had been gathered and analyzed using three different tools (questionnaire, FGD and EFL teachers CPD document analysis) were discussed and grouped into four major themes. The major themes of the discussion were on:

- ✚ Whether EFL teachers prefer school-based mentoring as their PD activities,
- ✚ Whether short term trainings and workshops were preferred by EFL teachers,
- ✚ Whether EFL teachers prefer engagement in reflective practice, and

Whether EFL teachers prefer school-based mentoring as their PD activities

As the data obtained from EFL teachers through questionnaire most of them preferred to take part in school-based mentoring as their professional development activities by supporting/helping less experienced and less qualified teachers. The grand mean value of the total EFL teachers' respondents on items was 3.43. This value showed that EFL teachers preferred school-based mentoring as their PD activities almost frequently and this grand mean was ranked the second that EFL teachers preferred to take part as their PD activities. This would enable EFL teachers to share experiences, knowledge and skills to their colleagues.

Similarly, data from the focus group discussion showed that some teachers have interest to take part in school-based mentoring program. But in contrast to this, a few respondents responded that there is no part form for teachers to help each other and to share experience with their colleagues.

Whether short term trainings and workshops were preferred CPD activities

The findings from questionnaire showed that majority of participant teachers' preferred short term trainings and workshops as their professional development activities. This also supported by the FGD in that the discussants mentioned EFL teachers participated in different trainings and workshops in previous two years to improve their professional practice. But, this lesson they learned from the trainings and workshops was not documented in their portfolio; and nothing was known whether they transferred the skills they got from the trainings to their teaching practice.

Whether EFL teachers prefer engagement in reflective practices.

Although it is crucial to participate in different types of professional development activities, in this study, the majority of participant EFL teachers did not prefer engagement in reflective practices as their professional development activity. As shown in the questionnaire analysis, the total mean for this item was 2.81 which is below the average mean 3.0. Hence, participant EFL teachers either did not have sufficient knowledge about engagement in reflective practices or they didn't want to take part in reflective practices.

The Focus group discussion also supports this. The discussants mentioned that EFL teachers' did not participate in reflective practice mainly for not knowing the 'what' and 'how' of reflective practices.

V. CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this study was to explore EFL teachers' preferences of professional development activities in four selected secondary schools of Gurage zone. The study also attempted to explore Whether EFL teachers prefer school-based mentoring, short term trainings and workshops, and engagement in reflective practices as their PD activities.

In order to achieve the objectives, descriptive survey research design was employed. Questionnaire, focused group discussion and EFL teachers' CPD portfolio analysis were used as data gathering instruments.

This study have identified that in the sample schools, teachers were obliged to take part in professional development activities which they did not prefer. In addition to this, they were found ignorant of reflective practices. They consider short term trainings and workshops as professional development activities and took part in different workshops and trainings related to their profession but nothing was known about the impact of the trainings and workshops in their professional practice as they were not documented in their portfolio.

The study also identified that there was no consistent follow up and evaluation mechanisms whether teachers actively participate in PD activities and / or whether it brings change in the classroom practices of the teacher. It is advisable if PD activities are considered as the major element in teachers' appraisal or career structure development.

To sum up, quality of education is determined by the availability of professionally competent and qualified teachers. Professional development activities are designed to improve the students' achievement. Thus, teachers are expected to be engaged in their preferred PD activities in order to improve their knowledge and skills. Teacher development programs would not be successful unless it includes teachers participation at all levels of professional development practices

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