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**Academic and Administrative Practices in Secondary School Teacher Education of Ethiopia: Implications for Student-Teachers' Learning Engagement**

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**Abstract:** *The main aim of this study was to examine student-teacher learning engagement with respect to secondary school teacher education academic and administrative practices<sup>1</sup>. Data were collected from 212 student teachers through questionnaire. Teacher education management staff and teacher educators participated in the interview sessions. One sample t-test, independent t-test, Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regressions were employed as data analysis techniques. The analysis of the data indicated the following. Among the variables under treatment, curriculum materials' contribution was significantly above the expected level of performance. The actual performances of the other variables such as teacher educators, student teachers, MoE, university and faculty/department were significantly below the expected standards. The entire academic practices were significantly greater than the entire administrative practices though both were not able to attain the expected standard. As the regression analysis revealed, all the six elected academic- and administrative-related practices as a whole contributed 46.19% of the variant for student-teachers' learning engagement. From this gross contribution (46.19%), 15.54% was credited for teacher educators, 12.78% for student teachers, 11.39% for the curriculum, 0.44% for MoE, 2.40% for universities, and 3.64% for faculty/department. Based on the results, teacher educators and student teachers need to be business-oriented for initiating student teachers learning engagement whatever the quality and amount of administrative practices look like. Teacher education administrative members (MoE, university and faculty or department management group) should acknowledge doing something in order to support student teachers learning engagement. Therefore, they should have clear guidelines to create mutual understanding and practice among all teacher education stakeholders in order to minimize challenges or confusions that come from misunderstandings.*

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<sup>1</sup> *Academic - accomplished by teacher educators, student teachers and the curriculum administrative - accomplished by MoE, university and faculty or department*

## **Introduction**

All efforts in the system of education including the teacher education institutions are for the sake of students' learning. This is because students' behavioral change is considered as the ultimate goal of a given education system. In this regard, Colliver (2000) contended that the underlined idea of teaching is that it does not matter what and how a teacher and other staff do but what and how the students do in relation to their learning. This implies that learning in all education systems including teacher education requires the stakeholders to put learners' concern and their learning at the heart of the education enterprise (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Copper, 1996; Biggs & Tang, 2007). Based on this, this study explored whether or not academic and administrative-related practices of teacher education institutions work for enhancing student-teachers' learning engagement. Since student teachers are the principal customer of the teacher education institution, their perceptions and beliefs about teacher education academic and administrative practices can be taken as relatively the proper data to examine the aforementioned topic under investigation.

Student-teachers' learning engagement is the crucial element of the teaching learning processes which need appropriate attention to handle (Cochran-Smith & Zeichaner, 2005; Afe, 2006) because the amount and quality of learning engagements determine the amount and quality of learning outcomes (Hall, 1995; Biggs & Tang, 2007). Learning engagement in teacher education institutions refers to the activities of student teachers in the different dimensions of the lesson - school practicum, action research, classroom course deliveries with different assignments and activities. In the constructivist learning theory, knowledge is conceived as a social construction, created by the individual learners' actual engagement to make sense of their world (Vygotsky, 1978; Oguz, 2008). This is different from trying to learn readymade knowledge from a given source passively (Oguz, 2008). Effective learning engagement, which gives more possibilities for students to have a capacity of self exploration of knowledge,

encourages student teachers to involve in creating their own knowledge and skill which will be adaptable and usable in any real-life practices in general and in their future teaching endeavor in particular (Daudelin, 1996; Scannell, 2011; Copper, 1996). Copper (1996) further contended that effective learning engagement fosters the ability of learners to respond successfully to the tasks set by somebody as well as by themselves. In other words, learning in teacher education should be done consciously and with proper engagements with the practical as well as theoretical lessons offered.

The capacity of teachers, which is mainly expected to develop during their stay at the teacher education, significantly influences quality of education in schools, which in turn determines the quality and amount of experts for other social and economic sectors. In this regard, Loughran (2006) stated that improving teacher education, which is basic for schooling, will help to boost the socioeconomic and technological status of the society through its products - teachers. In other words, teachers, who have significant roles in education through enhancing children's learning, are an important element of the education system (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). Therefore, teachers' preparation for teaching that has significant stake for teachers' quality, have been considered the most important school variable that influences students' academic achievement and related personality development (Verspoor, 2008) which could be taken as the center of the education system.

Student-teachers' learning in teacher education is, therefore, a crucial issue to consider. UNESCO (2011) contended that improvement of instructional quality at schools depends to a large extent on the pedagogical training and support provided to teachers during their stay at the teacher education before they begin their teaching careers. The teacher education institutions thus are considered as places where student teachers can develop basic ingredients to make them effective teachers. Hence, the academic as well as administrative practices and their effect on student-teachers' learning effectiveness at the teacher

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education institutions are worth studying. Hence, this research examined the impact of academic as well as administrative practices (as delivered by the respective stakeholders) on student-teachers' learning engagement at secondary school teacher education institutions in Ethiopia.

With this understanding, the current Ethiopian secondary school teacher education syllabus (post graduate diploma in teaching, PGDT syllabus) gives attention to subject area contents (as admission criteria), curricular and instructional principles and practices, practicum packages, action research, and communication skills (Ministry of Education, MoE, 2009). The syllabus also initiates practice-led training even during classroom course deliveries. Accordingly, before classroom discussions, student teachers are expected to visit the actual school setup and come with some reflections (MoE, 2009). Various stakeholders are involved for the improvements of the teacher education program in general and students' learning in particular.

It is possible to classify the entire practices of secondary school teacher education into academic and administrative practices. The academic practices of teacher education deal with the aspects of its curriculum implementation that encompasses designing, delivering and assessing theoretical as well as practical lessons/curriculum experiences (Afe, 2006; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010). The quality of academic practices in teacher education depends on the manner in which the institution providing the program operates via translating the broader curricular concerns into actualization as a function of its day-to-day teaching learning endeavor (National Assessment and Accreditation Council, 2007, Scannell, 2011). In addition to the teaching learning processes, mainly referred to as academic practices, the internal as well as external administrative practices are expected to make teacher education's working environment conducive for student teachers to learn and for teacher educators to teach and facilitate practical engagements. Most governments, though they have lowered the costs and administrative

qualities for educating their population, expect teacher education administrators and teacher educators to do much more, in more difficult circumstances than they have ever done before in order to have 'highly qualified teachers' in front of every classroom (Townsend & Bates, 2007).

However, some scholars, for example, Darling-Hammond (1997) and Doyle (1990), propose that the teaching profession will require major investments and attentions in order to have major transformations in the way teachers are recruited, accommodated, educated, licensed, hired, inducted, certified and supported. Therefore, when governments' efforts and practices in teacher education are inconsistent with the demand/expectation of the teaching profession, the challenges in teacher education are likely to be complicated and the interior institutional practices, especially the teaching learning engagement, are seriously affected. That is to mean that allocation of resources in the teacher education institutions as well as the incentives for the teaching force from primary to tertiary education level has run with scarcity (Dunking, 1987; Darling-Hammond, 1997), which in turn has negative impact on quality teachers in schools. These altogether make (UNESCO, 2010) the administrative practices of teacher education, particularly in sub-Saharan African countries, complex because it has multidimensional challenges in order to handle the entire teacher education (academic as well as administrative) practices properly. This might diminish the interest and commitment of student teachers and teacher educators in implementing the teacher education curricula. As a matter of these facts, the teacher education programs around the world entertain different paradigm shifts and forms of delivery that have their own inclinations (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005).

Ethiopia has undergone a number of changes in the delivery and forms of its teacher education. To begin with, in the beginning of modern education, teachers were expatriates although there were few church educators who participated to teach local languages and moral education (MoE, 2006); therefore, there was no formal teacher training

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institutions. In 1944/5, however, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Fine Arts opened its first teacher training institution housed in one room at the Menelik II School and it accepted trainees from those who completed grade 6 education. Though secondary school education was structured in the early 1940s, secondary school teacher education was initiated as late as the beginning of the 1960s in the Faculty of Education at Addis Ababa University (Teklehaimanot, 2000; MoE, 2006).

Ethiopia, in her various policy and legislation documents (MoE, 1994; 2003; 2009), has attempted to design and initiate different strategies in her secondary school teacher education through practice-led and open-ended contents and learning experiences for ensuring better student-teachers' learning. But, the visions stated in the policy documents as well as in the syllabus about secondary teachers' preparation for teaching seem to be poorly implemented (Kedir, 2006; Hussein, 2007; Addis Ababa University, 2013; MoE, 2013; Dawit, 2008). Possible indicators for this claim are being demonstrated within the performance and feeling of secondary school student teachers and teachers (Tadesse, 2013; Yergashewa, 2014).

Currently, for the requirements of the subject matter, student teachers who participate in secondary school teacher education institutions of Ethiopia should have a bachelor degree in one of the academic subjects (Amharic, biology, chemistry, geography, etc). On top of this, they are selected on a voluntary basis and expected to pass the entrance examination that consists of subject area, aptitude and English language tests. The student teachers in the program take courses such as school practicum and action research (6 Cr.hr), general and subject methodology (12 cr.hr), curriculum related courses (10 Cr hr), psychology related courses (6 Cr. hr.), reflection in teaching (3 cr.hr), and English for teaching purpose (3 Cr. hr) (MoE, 2009). Moreover, the underlining general philosophy and framework of the syllabus adhere to be practice-theory integrated approach, which encourages critical observation and reflection about the real school set

up, may lead student-teachers towards effective learning engagements.

It is acceptable that the efficiency and effectiveness of the entire teacher education academic (as delivered by teacher educators student teachers and the curricula) and administrative (as delivered by MoE, university and faculty/department actors) practices in general and their effect on student-teachers' learning engagement in particular might be taken as a vital instrument to tackle most of the problems observed in our secondary school teachers. On top of this, as long as the researcher's exploration in the area is concerned, so far there are no formal and organized investigations that have tried to see the correlation and multiple effects of academic and administrative practices on student-teachers' learning engagement in Ethiopia. In fact, researches related to the overall issues in secondary school teacher education are very limited in number (Amera, 2016).

Therefore, this study is relevant and timely to show something essential (whether or not the academic as well as administrative practices are supportive for student teachers learning engagement) in perspective to the current secondary school teacher education for the education community of Ethiopia in general and for teacher educators, student teachers, teacher education management in particular. As a result, this study may get significant attention by several educators to read and use for different purposes including further research involvements in the area. To this end, the present study intends to examine student-teachers' learning engagement with respect to secondary school teacher education academic (as accomplished by teacher educators, student teachers and the curriculum) and administrative (as accomplished by MoE, university and faculty/department management) practices.

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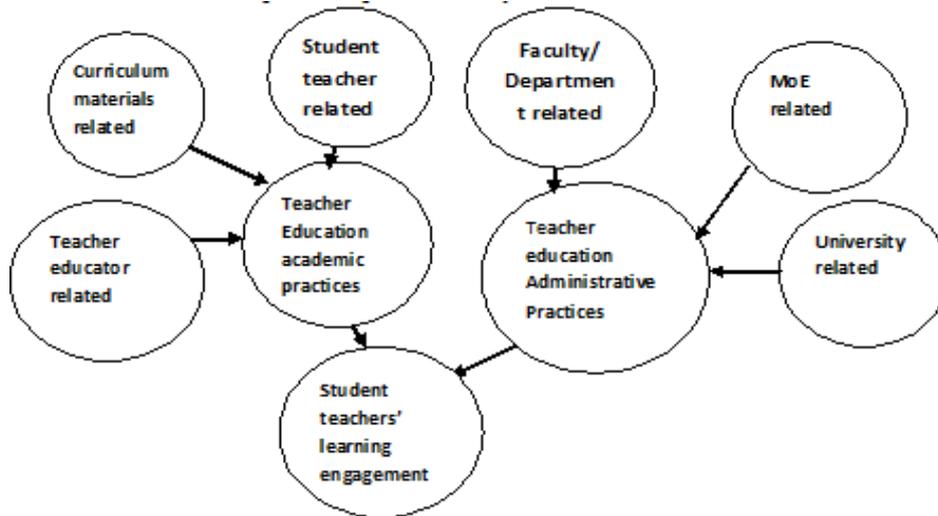
***Statement of the Problem***

In its delivery, the Ethiopian teacher education (at least at document and legislation level) has shifted from extremely theory-focused and teacher-centered approach (before the introduction of the Education and Training Policy, MoE, 1994) to relatively practice-focused and student-centered approach (MoE, 2003; Dawit, 2008; Mulugeta, 2009; Tadesse, 2013; Tesfaye, 2014). The policy, in this regard, directly stated: “Teacher education and training components will emphasize on basic knowledge, professional code of ethics, methodology and practical trainings” (MoE, 1994, p. 20). In order to materialize the goal of this policy, in the last 20 years, secondary school teacher education program in Ethiopia has gone through various amendments and revisions. Following the introduction of the TESO document, as a reform of teacher education in Ethiopia, more emphasis has been given to professional studies and school practicum with active and reflective engagement of student teachers via portfolio, action research reports and other assignments (Mulugeta, 2009; Dawit, 2008; MoE, 2013; Amera, 2016) though it was not implemented as intended (Husseini, 2007; Mulugeta, 2009; Yergashewa, 2014; Tesfaye, 2014; Amera, 2016).

The two major practices of teacher education institutions (academic and administrative) should be interwoven in a way that one supports the other by considering student-teachers’ learning engagement as an ultimate goal. Administrative practices (as mainly accomplished by MoE, university and faculty/department) of secondary school teacher education may include resource allocation, candidate’s recruitment, awareness development, accommodation, licensing, promoting the program, etc. (Townsend & Bates, 2007). Academic practices (as mainly accomplished by student teachers, teacher educators and the curricula) of teacher education, on the other hand, include all the duties related to teaching, supervising, assessing, mentoring, and overall students learning engagements over the curriculum (Afe, 2006; Loughran, 2006). If these two dimensions of teacher education

practices interplay in an efficient and effective manner, the overall program of the teacher education in general and student-teachers' learning engagement in particular will be successful (Darling-Hamond, 1997). Otherwise; it is unlikely to have better learning for student teachers and thereby produce reasonably good teachers for the schools.

Therefore, different actors within the academic as well as administrative practices need to work in harmony and synergy. In support of this, Afe (2006), for example, contended that effective learning engagement is ensured when there is a positive match among the three main elements (student teachers, teacher educators and the curriculum) of the academic practices which, in fact, needs smooth and supportive administrative practices from the respective stakeholders (MoE, university and faculty/department) (AAU, 2013; MoE, 2013). In other words, the efficiency and effectiveness of any educational system depends on the positive cohesion among these three academic elements. If one (e.g. the curriculum) has some deficiency or weakness in performing its role, it reduces productivity within the educational processes as a whole (Afe, 2006). Making an effective combination among these three academic elements and with respective administrative institutions (MoE, university and faculty/department) has a great role in facilitating the teaching learning processes thereby to enhance better learning engagements among student teachers at the teacher education (Loughran, 2006; Lewin & Stuart, 2003).



*Figure1: Conceptual Map of the Study*

Based on this, the present research tries to investigate the academic and administrative practices of teacher education institutions of Ethiopia and its effect on student-teachers' learning status. Accordingly, the research questions addressed in this study are:

- What is the current status of student-teachers' learning engagement, secondary school teacher education academic (as performed by student teachers, teacher educators and curriculum materials) and administrative (as performed by MoE, university and faculty/department) practices at secondary school teacher education?
- Are there significant differences between the entire secondary school teacher education academic and administrative practices?
- Do secondary school teacher education academic (as performed by student teachers, teacher educators and curriculum materials) and administrative (as performed by MoE, university and faculty/department) practices have contributions to student-teachers' learning engagement? If so, what are the independent and multiple

contributions of the predictive variables on student-teachers' learning engagement?

The result of this study might be helpful in informing the current practices (academic and administrative) for different stakeholders of secondary school teacher education. Teacher educators, student teachers, authorities and experts at different levels (MoE, university and education faculty/department) might be informed about the status of secondary school teacher education academic and administrative practices as well as student-teachers' learning engagement. As a result, each of the respective bodies (teacher educators, student teachers, curricula, MoE, university and education faculty/department) may act in a way that facilitates student-teachers' learning engagement so as to have well prepared teacher graduates.

#### *Operational Definitions*

*Academic Practices* refer to the issues of designing and delivering of lessons at the teacher education, which is usually accomplished by teacher educators, student teachers and of course with the curricula. This variable was quantified with 32 close-ended questionnaire items.

*Administrative Practices* include aspects of recruitment, awareness development, accommodations of candidates, resource allocation, good governance, etc which are expected to support the academic-related practices to be successful. Different actors like MoE, university, faculty/department are taken as the major stakeholders for the administrative practices of teacher education. This variable was quantified with 28 close-ended questionnaire items.

*Learning engagement:* can be measured through student-teachers' commitment, capacity and competence level to explore knowledge and skill that enable them to be a good school teacher. Student teachers expect to have the necessary preparation for their future teaching from

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their maximum involvement of the teacher education theoretical as well as practical course learning processes. This variable was measured with 15 close-ended questionnaire items.

## **Methodology of the Study**

### *Design of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to establish the status of student-teachers' learning engagement as a function of teacher education academic and administrative practices based on related data collected from a large sample size mainly through questionnaire. Accordingly, the study employs the descriptive survey method. A blend of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies is used with a major emphasis on quantitative data and its analysis. Using a blend of these two methodologies reinforces the results of the research (Miles & Huberman, 1994) because it avoids polarization, life at the extremes, and incorporates the ideas of realists, idealists and critical theorists at a time (Dornyei, 2007).

### *Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques*

The main data sources of this study are student teachers because they are the main stakeholders of their learning and they can easily understand and interpret the effect of administrative and academic practices on their learning. As a result, their views and perceptions are decisive to draw some conclusions and to conduct interventions in teacher education. Teacher educators and university/faculty teacher education management body are the source of qualitative data through interview. Currently, there are ten universities engaged in educating secondary school teachers through a program called postgraduate diploma in teaching (PGDT). Four universities (Bahir Dar, Wollo, Jimma and Hawassa universities) are selected for this study through simple random sampling technique. The sampling technique is used for the sake of giving equal chances for all the ten universities that host

secondary school teacher education in the country. In 2015 academic year these four universities accommodated 844 student teachers. Of this target population, 212 (98 females and 114 males) student teachers are selected through systematic random sampling. Purposive sampling is employed to identify teacher educators and teacher education managers for the interview. Teacher educators' and management members' willingness, experience, better access to the information related to the issue under investigation are considered to identify interview respondents. Accordingly, four teacher educators (T1, T2, T3, and T4) and four teacher education management members (M1, M2, M3 and M4), each from the selected four universities, are involved.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

Questionnaire and interview are used as data gathering instruments. Questionnaire is employed to collect the major data of this study from student teachers. It focuses on collecting data about the academic and administrative practices of secondary school teacher education as well as student-teachers' learning engagement. The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part of the questionnaire has completion items, which helps to collect data about respondents' sex and name of university that hosts the teacher education. The second part consists of close-ended items, which helps to get information about the variables of the study. The items are constructed based on various theoretical as well as empirical literature such as the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (2007), Addis Ababa University (2013), Biggs & Tang (2007) and Scannell (2011) about teacher education academic and administrative practices as well as student-teachers' learning engagement.

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The questionnaire has six sets of items each requiring data about MoE, university, faculty/ departments (mainly responsible for administrative practices), teacher educators, student teachers, and curriculum (mainly responsible for academic practices). In general, the questionnaire has 76 items first. The face validity test of all the instruments (questionnaire and interview) is checked with the help of four professionals (1 educational psychology specialist, 2 curriculum and/or instruction specialists and 1 English language specialist). Based on comments obtained from these experts, critical revisions (amending, rejecting and/or adding of items) are done on the items of the questionnaire. By doing so, in addition to the amendments, 3 questionnaire items are rejected and 2 are added. Lastly, the questionnaire is set with 75 items.

The reliability coefficients of the questionnaire are calculated by using Cronbach alpha. The results are 0.82 (for teacher educator-related questionnaire), 0.87 (for student teacher-related questionnaire), 0.79 (for curriculum-related questionnaire), 0.81 (for MoE-related questionnaire), 0.84 (for university-related questionnaire), and 0.83 (for faculty/department-related questionnaire). The questionnaire is prepared and administered in English language because all the respondents are first degree holders. The response format range, for the close-ended items, included strongly disagree, disagree, moderately agree, agree and strongly agree. In scoring, a point of 1 is assigned for a "strongly disagree;" 2 for a "disagree;" 3 for "moderately agree;" 4 for an "agree" response, and 5 for a "strongly agree" response.

The interview is a semi-structured type. It is employed to obtain deeper and inner understandings about secondary school teacher education academic as well as administrative practices and student-teachers' learning engagements. The respondents are teacher educators and focal persons for teacher education management. The study used six interview items for initiating and guiding the interview sessions.

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*Data Analysis Techniques*

Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques are used. The quantitative data considered as the major data of this study, is collected through questionnaire and analyzed using different statistical techniques such as one sample t-test, dependent t-test, and multiple regression.

One sample t-test is employed to see the current status of student-teachers' learning engagement, secondary school academic as well as administrative practices as perceived by student teachers.

The dependent t-test is calculated to analyze the differences between secondary school teacher education academic and administrative practices. This test is appropriate to see the variations of two different behavioral mean scores (e.g. administrative and academic behaviors) within a single group (e.g. student teachers).

Multiple regression is employed to identify the independent and multiple contributions of the independent variables (teacher educators, student teachers, curriculum, MoE, university and faculty/department) on the dependent variable (student-teachers' learning engagement). Since the study mainly follows a quantitative survey design in using student-teachers' opinion via questionnaire, the level of significance is fixed as 0.05. The qualitative data collected through interview is presented and analyzed thematically in line with the pre-identified research questions in order to supplement the quantitative data.

**Results**

The main purpose of this study is to examine the status of student-teachers' learning engagement as a function of teacher education academic and administrative practices mainly as perceived by student teachers. One-sample t-test is employed to check whether the mean

score values are significantly below or above the expected mean of the population.

**Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation and One Sample t-test Results of the Variables of the Study as Perceived by Student Teachers (N = 212)**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>t-test</b>	<b>P values</b>
Teacher educators' Practice	2.64	1.68	2.34	0.01
Curriculum materials contribution	3.08	2.44	2.98	0.00
Student-teachers' practice	2.36	1.24	2.65	0.01
MoE management Practices	1.98	3.86	2.78	0.03
University management practice	2.14	3.27	2.45	0.02
Faculty/department management practices	2.42	3.12	2.08	0.00
Student-teachers' learning engagement	2.31	2.21	2.74	0.01

t-critical = 1.96, expected mean = 3.00 and  $P < 0.05$

As indicated in Table 1, all the mean values (except curriculum materials contribution) of responses are significantly below the expected mean of the population (3.00). This implies that teacher educators and student-teachers' involvement as well as administrative supports by MoE, university and faculty/ department management including student-teachers' learning engagement are in their minimal position. Only the curriculum materials as a document are a bit above the expected mean.

In addition to examining the status of each of the variables, the study has also planned to examine the differences between the entire academic and administrative practices performed at secondary school teacher education. This result is helpful in order to see the variations of the performances of these two independent variables which their result in turn has an effect on student teachers learning engagement. In order to address this purpose, dependent t-test result is calculated and

reported in Table 2. According to Table 2, entire academic-related practices (2.78) are in a better attempt of performances than the entire administrative practices (2.12). In other words, as perceived by student teachers, the efforts exerted by teacher educators, student teachers and the curricula seem to be encouraging when it compared with the efforts employed by the MoE, university and faculty/department management.

**Table 2: Dependent t-test Result about the Differences between Teacher Education Entire Academic and Administrative Practices as Perceived by Student Teachers (N=212)**

Variables	Mean	SD	t-test	P-Value
Entire academic practices	2.78	2.73	3.42	0.00
Entire administrative practices	2.12	3.24		

t-critical = 1.96 and  $P < 0.05$

Another purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship of the variables of the study thereby to identify the contributions of the independent variables such as teacher educators (X1), curriculum materials (X2), student teachers (X3), MoE (X4), university (X5), and faculty/department (X6) practices over the dependent variable-student-teachers' learning engagement (X7).

**Table 3: Interrelationship among the Variables of the Study as Perceived by Student Teachers**

Variables	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7
X1	-						
X2	0.56	-					
X3	0.52	0.52	-				
X4	0.38	0.41	0.51	-			
X5	0.46	0.50	0.55	0.70	-		
X6	0.49	0.56	0.57	0.67	0.69	-	
X7	0.74	0.67	0.71	0.44	0.48	0.52	-

\* $P < 0.05$

To do so, correlation coefficient and multiple regression statistics are calculated and reported in Table 3 and 4 respectively. Table 3 reveals that the correlation coefficients between all the variables of the study is positive and above medium level. This serves as a hint to go further for the regression analysis and then to know the independent and multiple effects of the predictive variables over the dependent variable.

**Table 4: Results of Multiple Regression Statics of Predictor Variables on Student-teachers' Learning Engagement**

Predictor Variables	Regression Coefficient	t- Statistics	P Value
Teacher educators' practice (X1)	0.21	3.62	0.001
Curriculum materials contribution (X2)	0.17	3.45	0.002
Student-teachers' practices (X3)	0.18	3.68	0.00
MoE management practices (X4)	0.01	1.12	0.14
University management practices (X5)	0.05	1.16	0.11
Faculty/department management practices (X6)	0.07	1.34	0.08
Over all $R^2$	0.4619		
F value	30.76		

To know the significant contributions of the independent variables (teacher educators, curriculum materials, student teachers, MoE, university, and faculty/department) on the dependent variable (student-teachers' learning engagement), regression analysis is utilized (see Table 4). The regression analysis results in Table 4 indicate that there is significant contribution of teacher educators (15.54%), curriculum materials (11.39%) and student-teachers' (12.78%) involvement for the realization of student-teachers' learning engagement ( $R^2 = 0.4619$ ,  $F = 30.76$ ). The impact of faculty management (3.64%), university management (2.40%) and particularly MoE's (0.44%) support for student-teachers' learning engagement, on the other hand, are found to be very low. In other words, the administrative agents do not seem to be facilitative for the well accomplishment of the teaching learning processes in general and student-teachers' learning engagement in particular. In general, the composite contribution of all the predictive variables to the variance of student-teachers' learning engagement is 46.19% in a way that 33.64% is responsible for teacher educators, 24.66% for curriculum materials, 27.67% for student teachers and the remaining 14.03% for the other three administration-related predictive variables: Faculty management, university management and MoE. 43.81% of the variance for student-teachers' learning engagement could be attributed to the other factors not yet examined in this study.

Furthermore, the direct effects of the predictor variables on student-teachers' learning engagement are determined using path coefficients. The effects on student-teachers' learning engagement of teacher educators ( $\beta = 0.21$ ,  $t = 3.62$ ,  $P < 0.03$ ), curriculum materials ( $\beta = 0.17$ ,  $t = 3.45$ ,  $P < 0.003$ ), student-teachers' ( $\beta = 0.18$ ,  $t = 3.68$ ,  $p < 0.03$ ) involvement are statistically significant. This implies that teacher educators, curriculum materials and student teachers have relatively played their role in maximizing student-teachers' learning engagement at the teacher education. On the contrary, the effect of faculty management ( $\beta = 0.07$ ,  $t = 1.34$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ), university management ( $\beta = 0.005$ ,  $t = 1.16$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ) and MoE's ( $\beta = 0.01$ ,  $t = 1.12$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ) on learning engagement are not statistically significant (Table 4).

## Discussions

Except curriculum materials' contribution, all the other predictive variables involvement and support towards student teachers' learning engagement was below the expected level. In other words, teacher educators, student teachers, MoE, university, and faculty/ department management were not in a position to facilitate student-teachers' learning engagement as expected (see Table 1). As a result, student-teachers' learning engagement was also below the expected level. However, curriculum materials (PGDT syllabus, course guide books, assignments, etc), as a document, seemed to be encouraging for initiating students towards learning. Since curriculum materials are expected to be manipulated and delivered by student teachers, teacher educators and of course by different management body (Lewin & Stuart, 2003; Loughran, 2006), their quality (as a document) alone might not call an observable change on student-teachers' learning engagement. This might be the possible reason for the results (i.e. low status in student-teachers' learning engagement) found in this study.

The interview responses also revealed that there were not as such significant problems related to the teacher education curriculum materials. Curriculum materials, in their design, initiated more of open-ended, practice-focused, self-initiated learning, etc delivery (T2 & T4). However, for the failure of teacher education curricula delivery, interview respondents complained about the performance gaps observed one over the other. That is to mean, management group complained about teacher educators and student teachers' performance and the other way round. For example, teacher educator (T2) responded,

The management group at MoE, university as well as in the faculty gave minimal attention for assigning proper dormitories, teacher educators, library services, etc for student teachers. Student-teachers' recruitment and allocation to different teacher education institutions were not accomplished on time. It lagged behind about 3-5 months,

which had its own negative contribution for student teachers learning engagement.

Respondent M1, on his side, said that though there were certain managerial related barriers, the main problems observed at the teacher education curricula delivery were related to less readiness, loss of interest, unnecessary expectations, etc of teacher educators and student teachers. In any cases, since the main actors over the curricula such as teacher educators, student teachers, and partly the management body played their role below the standard, student-teachers' learning engagement could not be to the expected level though the curriculum materials were not bad.

The entire administrative practices were significantly in lower level performance than the entire academic practices did (see Table 2). This shows that although the academic practice attempted to do its best, the administrative practice might be tackled as a challenge for the overall system including student-teachers' learning engagement. In this regard, Lewin and Stuart (2003) noted that the administrative practices in any educational institution have to work for the sake of the academic practices; otherwise nothing has to be done for its own sake. Furthermore, the administrative practice can be taken as an engine for obtaining successful academic practice which expresses itself through successful learning engagements and outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Lewin & Stuart, 2003). This might be the possible reason that the present study, though there were relatively good academic practices, found poor student-teachers' learning engagement.

In support of this, the interview responses also indicated that both academic and administrative practices have to work in an interconnected manner. Particularly, the administrative practices have to measure their success from the success of the academic practices (T1 & M3). In other words, the administrative practice has to give the priority for the tasks that have direct impact for academic practices in general and students' learning in particular (T1, T3, M1, & M3).

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However, this was not the case in the system of our teacher education. As T3, T4 & M4 said, student teachers usually allocated in a campus which has free spaces for dormitory and classroom services without considering the distance and other barriers for their respective teacher educators' library services, which are decisive for their learning.

The faculty/department management, moreover, did not work to fulfill some critical conditions [e.g. school university linkage (M4), looking for secondary school textbooks (T3 & T4), assigning properly trained teacher educators for some courses (T4 & M2), and monitoring the delivery practices (T1, T3 & M4)] for the teaching learning processes in general and for students' learning engagement in particular (T1, T3, T4, M2 & M4). Such kinds of uneven residence and classroom allocation of student teachers to their academic resources had an adverse implication for student-teachers' learning engagements. If the system of our teacher education continues in such a way, all the labor as well as financial expenses expended would be a wastage of resources.

The other intention of this study was to see the independent and multiple effects of predictive variables over the dependent variable – student-teachers' learning engagements. As a response to this intent, the regression analysis indicated that there were relatively better contributions from the academic practices (85.97% out of the total  $R^2$ ) than administrative practices (14.03% out of the total  $R^2$ ) (see Table 4). This shows that teacher education administrative practices are extremely lagging behind the academic practices which could be taken as a serious challenge for realizing effective teacher education. The regression analysis result is smoothly related to the results of the dependent t-test (Table 2). The table shows that the academic practices were in a better position than the administrative practices. That is why the academic practices also tended to show much better effect on student-teachers' learning engagement (see Table 4). It seems clear that the academic practice (with little support from the administrative practice) did its best to maximize student-teachers'

learning engagement though all the academic practices including student-teachers' learning engagement were below the expected level (see Table 1).

To sum up, the administrative practices (in all of the statistical analysis results: One sample t-test, independent t-test, regression) were not in a position to facilitate the academic practices in a way that to encourage student teachers towards proper learning engagements. Even within the hierarchies of the administrative practices (MoE, university and faculty/department management), there were variations. When the administrative practices move from MoE to university and then to the faculty/department level management, their contributions to student-teachers' learning engagement have increased. This possibly indicates that when the management group is near to the student-teachers' actual interface, its contribution to learning engagement maximizes a bit more than doing things with (no external pressure from student teachers) their own plans and decisions. Even though the contributions of teacher educators (15.54% out of the total  $R^2 = 46.19\%$ ) and student teachers (12.78% out of the total  $R^2 = 46.19\%$ ) in student-teachers' learning engagement seemed encouraging in delivering the curriculum materials, they lacked to exploit the maximum potential that the curriculum had (see Table 1).

## Conclusions

From the analyses and discussions, the following are the results:

- Except the contributions of the curriculum materials, all the academic (teacher educators and student teachers' involvement) as well as administrative (MoE, university and faculty/department management involvement) variables were significantly below the expected level of performance including student-teachers' learning engagement;

- In general terms, the entire academic practices, as accomplished by teacher educators, student teachers and curriculum materials, were significantly greater than the entire administrative practices, as were MoE, university and faculty/department management groups;
- The academic practices (by teacher educators = 15.54% and student teachers = 12.78% and curriculum materials = 11.39%) contributed 39.71% of the variance for student-teachers' learning engagement. Administrative practices (MoE = 0.44%, university management = 2.40% and faculty/department management=3.64%), on the other hand, contributed 6.48% of the variance for student-teachers' learning engagement.

From these results, it is possible to conclude that the administrative practices of teacher education are not in a position to support the academic practices in general and student-teachers' learning engagements in particular. Relatively speaking, though it was not to the expected level of performance, academic performances contributed something better than the administrative practices in order to encourage student-teachers' learning engagements.

### **Recommendations**

In line with the major findings, the following recommendations can be made:

- Teacher educators and student teachers must be wise and business-oriented in order to maximize student-teachers' engagement in learning the curricula which are relatively well designed and well organized. This can be realized by using instructional time effectively by focusing on tasks related to learning whatever the supports of the administrative practices may look like;

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- MoE, university and faculty/department management teams should acknowledge that their presence is just for the sake of facilitating the academic practices particularly student-teachers' learning engagements. As a result, they have to play their roles on time and with relative accuracy in order to support student-teachers' learning in efficient and effective manner;
  - For example, MoE has to have clear guideline about how, when and where student teachers are participating in different duties. Accordingly, MoE can work on student-teachers' recruitment, allocation to different teacher education institutions (universities), assignment for accommodation, academic calendar (the beginning and ending of a semester/term), etc. within the frames of a given guideline;
  - The university management also should care for realizing even distributions of resources (e.g. dormitories, classrooms, libraries, computer centers. etc) for student teachers instead of assigning them in less privileged residential areas, classrooms and libraries. Rather, the university has to reserve a campus (which contains teacher educators, teacher education library and the like) for student teachers so that it will be helpful to ensure relatively better learning engagements;
  - The faculty/department management has to play its role in assigning proper and trained teacher educators for the respective courses, in doing course delivery follow-ups, in searching and fulfilling course materials (eg. secondary school subject area books), in facilitating secondary schools for any practical fields including the practicum course.

In general, all the concerned administrative agents starting from MoE, university and then faculty/department level should have a mutual understanding on how all teacher education-related tasks including the detailed course delivery and evaluation practices are progressing. For instance, they need to have clear directions in terms of budget and

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resource allocation as well as the rights and responsibilities expected from teacher educators, student teachers, and the management bodies as well. Based on this, the potential barriers that affect student-teachers' learning engagement could be overcome successfully.

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