Competency Beliefs, Teaching Confidence and Teaching Performances of English Major Graduating Students in Teaching Practice

Abiy Yigzaw*

Abstract: *This study endeavored to explore the competency beliefs, teaching confidence in teaching practice, and teaching performances of graduating English major students at Bahir Dar University (BDU). Pre-and post-teaching practice explorations were made using questionnaires, interviews, and documents analyses. Pearson's Correlation Co-efficient and descriptive methods were employed for analysis,. Findings indicated a strong correlation between the trainees' competency beliefs in their linguistic capacity and knowledge of methods. Their competency beliefs, however, had no significant relations with their teaching confidence and teaching performance. The instructors reported the trainees had low level of competence. The trainees' interview indicated that there was a mismatch between their expectations and the classroom realities. Finally, it was concluded that many of the trainees may have been equipped with theoretical knowledge, but they lacked adequate teaching practice and language command. Therefore, it was recommended that the trainees be offered additional skill courses to enhance their language capacity, more practice time be arranged, and methodology courses be designed to integrate awareness creating and practice.*

Introduction

Language teacher education offers two kinds of structured professional education. The first is believed to equip trainees with the necessary intellectual content of linguistic skills. The other is assumed to enable the trainees to become professionally competent with necessary knowledge of teaching. An inseparable concurrent or subsequent activity to the knowledge of teaching is teaching practice.

* Assistant Professor, Bahir Dar University.

The degree courses in English offered at Bahir Dar University (BDU) are designed to develop the students' linguistic capacity and their teaching skills. To enhance their linguistic capacity, the students are offered three speech (144 hrs.), four writing (192 hrs.) one listening (48 hrs.) and one reading (48 hrs.) courses. Grammar and vocabulary are mainly studied at first year level and are extended to a higher level incorporated into other skills. For their professional preparation, the students take one general (48 hrs.) and two subject specific methodology (96 hrs.) courses. By offering these courses, the English department expects to have proficient and competent graduates in English. The department's expectations are described in the department objectives and in the graduate profile included in the 1999 College catalogue. Two of the points embodied in the graduate profile of the English language trainees are:

- Graduates will be proficient in listening, speaking, reading, and writing; and
- Graduates will be equipped with the knowledge of various language teaching methods, approaches, and techniques to apply them in their classrooms effectively and flexibly.

In short, the courses are believed to equip the trainees with linguistic knowledge and skills, and to enable them to share their knowledge, skills, and experiences as teachers.

The students are required to practice teaching for three weeks in the year of their graduation after they have passed the prerequisite methodology courses. The systems for evaluating their achievement and effective practice are semester examinations and classroom teaching supervision respectively.

This study sought to explore the competency beliefs, confidence in teaching, and teaching practice performances of prospective English major graduates of July 2000 at BDU. It attempted to respond to the following research questions.

Research Questions

- Concurrent with the departmental output expectations of proficient and adequately prepared teachers, do the trainees feel competent with the awareness created in language skills and methodology?

- Do they feel comfortable to teach in the high schools in the teaching practice programme?

- Do their teaching performances in the teaching practice match with their competency beliefs and teaching confidence?

Rationale

The aim of teacher education is to prepare trainees to become effective teachers by providing them with the necessary subject-matter (content) and pedagogical knowledge and skills (Schön, 1983). Effectiveness of trainee preparation may be evaluated by evaluators, teachers, and/or educational authorities. This sort of evaluation, however, has been criticized by many scholars such as Williams and Burden (1997) as 'outward' or 'external'. The most important thing that has been considered as an addition (or as an alternative by some people) to the external factor is the understanding of teachers' thinking or beliefs.

Thus far, trainees' beliefs regarding what and how to teach have been widely studied (Gow and Kember, 1993 as cited by Williams and Burden, 1997). However, studies about trainees' beliefs about themselves (their beliefs about their content and pedagogical knowledge) and their teaching confidence are relatively limited. This study, therefore, wanted to explore the beliefs of English language trainees at BDU about their linguistic capacity and pedagogical knowledge. It also wanted to investigate their confidence in teaching in the teaching practice.

A couple of reasons encouraged the researcher to study these issues. First, the English department at BDU evaluates the proficiency or competence of its trainees predominantly through examinations and supervision. This kind of evaluation may provide only a partial indication of the achievement and confidence of the trainees as well as programme effectiveness. Hence, studying the competency beliefs and the teaching confidence of the trainees would also be worth considering. Second, so far only little or none is known about the English language trainees' competency beliefs and/ or teaching confidence at BDU. So, there seems to be a felt need to investigate these issues.

The result of the study can be useful for the students to assess where they stand; for the courses developers, to revise course objectives and content; and for English language instructors, to work towards satisfying trainees' needs; i.e. to plug into the lacks of students.

Literature Review

Expected outcomes from teacher education

Different writers (e.g. Kessler, 1992; Schön, 1983) expounded the need for professional knowledge in teacher education. Schön (1983) categorized professional knowledge under *received* and *experienced* knowledge, while Ellis (1986) classified it as *awareness-raising* and *experiential*. The *received (awareness-raising)* knowledge constituted subject-matter knowledge (the necessary intellectual content), the underlying teaching principles and practical techniques. The *experienced (experiential)* knowledge, on the other hand, refers to that secured in actual teaching (Wallace, 1991; Reynolds, 1992).
As in general education, in language teacher education also knowledge in the two areas stated above is required. It is true that in order to have an effective English teacher, training is essential. And the training involves strong theoretical preparation and practice. The theoretical preparation includes structured professional education in

linguistic mastery, training in skills proficiency and acquisition of the enabling skills (methods, approaches, and techniques) of teaching. Concerning the preparation, Brown (1990:87) said that the teacher in the course of training should acquire knowledge of the *what, how, and why of teaching a language*. These three domains refer to knowledge of the language (subject-matter) and methodology. Berry (1990:99) also explicated the importance of high language proficiency particularly for non-native language teachers as: *the language level of non-native teachers is important in determining the extent to which the teacher uses the target language in the classroom and whether this will provide reliable input for learners*. He noted that high language proficiency increases teacher confidence, facilitates the use of the target language in the classroom, and widens the choice of methodology. Wallace (1991:15) described the skilled language teacher as one who *will be able to speak the target language to a reasonable degree of fluency, to organize pair and group work, to read a simple phonetic transcription, to be familiar with certain grammatical terms and so on*.

Whereas Brown (1990), Berry (1990), and Wallace (1991) stressed on the need for linguistic knowledge, skills, and proficiency of language teachers, Freeman and Richards (1996) considered the pedagogical factor as decisive in carrying out teaching practice successfully and activities related to confidence development. The pedagogical knowledge can help the trainees to carry out similar instruction during teaching practice, i.e. as may be expected by their trainers. Freeman and Richards (1996) wrote that teachers, however, were observed evading the methods introduced in campus courses so as to use other alternatives in their actual teaching environment.

In summary, the expected outcomes from teacher education, particularly from language teacher education, are the trainees' linguistic and pedagogic competence. Competence in both is vital to carry out language teaching in the short-term teaching practice university requirement and beyond in the life-long teaching career.

Teachers' beliefs

With the advent of cognitive psychology, the research emphasis on teaching and learning has shifted from process-product observations to a focus on teachers' thinking, beliefs, planning and decision-making processes (Fang, 1996). This shift of emphasis towards teachers' perceptions might be because, on one hand, knowledge is understood as the development of beliefs and attitudes (Deford, 1985; Blanton and Moorman, 1987). On the other, many of the characteristics, such as being concerned, active, respected, efficient, etc. (Ericksen, 1984), assumed as qualities of an effective teacher by many scholars, were criticized as 'outward' characteristics. Hence, 'inward' characteristics such as teacher beliefs and thinking were given attention. It is believed that teachers' actions are highly influenced by their beliefs, even more than they are determined by their knowledge (Williams and Burden, 1997). Studying the beliefs of the trainees about their academic capabilities, therefore, will be crucial. Pajares (1996:2) wrote that beliefs help the trainees *determine what they do with the knowledge and skills they possess*. He added, *people engage in tasks in which they feel competent and confident and avoid those in which they do not*. The effort people exert to accomplish tasks, and their perseverance will be influenced by their beliefs. Hence, the trainees' competency beliefs and their confidence in teaching can influence their classroom teaching in the teaching practice.

Teachers' past experience as learners is considered as the principal source of beliefs. Change of conceptions due to new orientations is assumed to be taxing and potentially threatening for teachers (Florio-Ruane and Lensmire, 1990; Richards and Lockhart, 1994; Williams and Burden, 1997). Other sources of beliefs can be teachers' assumptions of the best method(s), their established practice, their accepted principles from approaches and methods, and other personality factors (Richards and Lockhart, 1994).

Teachers' beliefs can be seen in two perspectives. The first is the belief about what and how to teach. The second, however, is teachers' beliefs about themselves. Both contribute to teachers' confidence in teaching.

- *Teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning*

Teachers' belief about teaching and learning constitutes the 'culture of teaching' which refers both to the content and the process of teaching. Such a belief determines teachers' instructional actions.

> Teachers' belief systems are founded on the goals, values, and beliefs teachers hold in relation to the content and process of teaching, and their understanding of the systems in which they work and their roles within it. These beliefs and values serve as the background to much of the teachers' decision making and action, and hence constitute what has been termed the 'culture of teaching' (Richards and Lockhart, 1994:30).

This role of belief is also reflected in Williams and Burden (1997) as *teachers' deep-rooted beliefs about how languages are learned will pervade their classroom actions*. Beliefs are considered to be more influential than the methodology teachers are told to adopt.

A common dimension of teachers' belief of English Language Teaching (ELT) teacher education is *linear* that involves the imparting of skills or competencies. The trainees are expected to come out and behave the same in certain ways. The linear approach may result in a change of behavior, but not necessarily a commitment or a belief (Williams, 1994). The other dimension which has received a tremendous support recently is the process and methodology of training and how teachers learn and develop.

> Recently attention has shifted from consideration of the content of teacher training, what to teach teachers, to the process and methodology of training and how teachers

> learn.... Concern therefore...focuses on how teachers learn or develop (Williams, 1994:215).

- *Teachers' beliefs about themselves*

To be effective, teachers need to convey a sense of self-confidence and develop self-esteem. Developing confidence and self-esteem helps teachers provide a supportive learning environment (Pine and Boy, 1977). To the contrary, lack of confidence in skills they possess leads them to evade the teaching task, or their attempts will vanish in time of difficulty (Pajares, 1996). Studies on pre-service teachers' beliefs about themselves revealed that most of them possessed an unrealistic optimism, and a self-serving bias (Florio-Ruane and Lensmire, 1990). Florio-Ruane and Lensmire reported that these teachers perceived they would be successful in teaching and predicted they would excel their peers. They overvalued affective variables and undervalued cognitive (academic) variables. Bandura (1995) also indicated that pre-service teachers had such beliefs. He wrote that their sense of teacher efficacy was related to their beliefs about controlling students. Many of them tended to hold a pessimistic view of students' motivation, and emphasized rigid control of classroom behavior. Such teachers relied on extrinsic inducements and negative sanctions to get students to study.

Research showed that pre-service teachers were endowed with prior beliefs, and orientations to new approaches and methods of teaching were taxing and rather threatening. For example, Goodman (1988) found that pre-service teachers' educational philosophy was rooted on their earlier experiences as pupils. These early experiences in developing educational beliefs may influence the pre-service teachers to become 'resistant-to-change'.

In short, pre-service teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning as well as about themselves are based on their early experiences. In fact, it is asserted that language teacher education strives a lot to build pre-service teachers' teaching confidence and their belief in

their own ability (Williams, 1994). A better understanding of pre-service teachers' perceptions (beliefs) of the practicum is assumed to provide language teacher education an opportunity to better understand how language teachers learn to teach. Recent researches suggest that the realities of the classroom rarely conform to pre-service teachers' expectations or images (Kagan, 1992; Johnson, 1996). A language teacher preparation program, therefore, is expected to provide trainees with a theoretical view of teaching as well as a recognition of the classroom reality.

Operational Definitions

Competency beliefs =	trainees' beliefs about their knowledge and ability in English language as well as knowledge in methodology.
Teaching confidence =	trainees' feelings to carry out teaching (particularly in the teaching practice).
Pre-service teachers =	trainees; student-teachers; would-be graduates; graduating class English major students.

Methodology

Participants and data sources

All the 24 prospective graduates of the English department at Bahir Dar University (who would graduate in July 2000) participated in this study. Of these, five students did not respond to one or two items in any one of the questionnaires. So, they were excluded from the study. The data were gathered using multiple instruments: questionnaires, interviews and documents analyses.

Procedure

Pre-and post-teaching practice explorations were made. Before the three weeks teaching practice period, three types of questionnaires each of which constituted 10 closed items were distributed. The items in the questionnaires were adapted from Gibson and Dembo's (1984) Teacher Efficacy Scale (for competency beliefs) and Woolfolk and Hoy's (1990) Teacher Confidence (for confidence in teaching). Two of the questionnaires focused on the trainees' espoused competency beliefs in linguistic ability and professional knowledge, and were distributed a month before the teaching practice period. The third type required information about their teaching confidence and was distributed and returned two days before the teaching practice period. This period was opted because it was considered as a reasonable time to obtain information about trainees' teaching confidence in teaching practice.

Each of the questionnaires constituted a five-point rating scale that ranged from strongly *agree* to strongly *disagree*. The scales were given 5 to 1 values respectively. The questions in the first type of questionnaire asked the students about their competency beliefs in the four language skills including vocabulary knowledge and grammar. The second type required them to rate their competency beliefs in the professional knowledge (methodology) they secured in teaching the four language skills, vocabulary and grammar. The third

type, however, required them to rate their confidence level to teach the four skills, vocabulary and grammar in the teaching practice period.

The data gathered using the questionnaires were assumed to indicate the trainees' espoused (expressed) competency beliefs and teaching confidence. In order to investigate their actual performance, however, their teaching practice results were gathered from the teaching practice coordinator. Furthermore, they were interviewed about how they found their teaching expectations against the classroom reality. The interview was conducted to find out their views based on the classroom reality. In addition, six English language instructors, who were trainees' supervisors in teaching practice, were interviewed about what they had expected from their practising students (trainees) and what they really had observed during supervision. Information about the supervisors' expectations versus the classroom realities was sought to secure supportive evidence and to reinforce the findings. The teaching practice assessment check-list (which is currently used as a yardstick) of the English department was also analyzed to see the instructors' focus in evaluating the pre-service teachers' teaching practice performances.

Method of analysis

The data obtained about the students' competency beliefs in linguistic ability and professional knowledge, their teaching confidence as well as their teaching practice results were statistically computed. The mean value and standard deviation of each of the above variables were computed to provide descriptive analysis. To determine the mean value and the standard deviation, the questionnaires' results were converted to 100. This was done to make the comparisons between the teaching practice results and the other variables easy.

In addition, Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was used to assess to what extent each of the variables had relations and a predictive value

to one another. The post-teaching interviews and the teaching practice assessment checklist, however, were qualitatively analyzed.

Findings

Statistical findings

Table 1: Mean Value and Standard deviation of the Competency Beliefs, Teaching Confidence and Teaching Practice Results

	Linguistic competency beliefs	Professional competency beliefs	Confidence in teaching	Teaching practice results
Mean	71.58	77.68	75.47	65.58
SD	12.09	14.84	9,20	6.58

Put in descending order, each of the variables had the following mean: professional competency beliefs, 77.68; confidence in teaching, 75.47; linguistic competency beliefs, 71.58; and teaching practice results, 65.58. The highest deviation from the mean was observed in the trainees' professional competency beliefs (14.84), and the least from teaching practice results (6.58).

The correlations among the trainees' linguistic and professional competency beliefs, their teaching confidence and their teaching practice results were computed. The results are shown in Table 2.

As indicated in Table 2, the correlation between trainees' linguistic and professional competency beliefs was 0.67. The correlations between their linguistic competency beliefs and their teaching confidence, as well as their teaching practice results were 0.01 and -0.24 respectively. The correlations between their professional competency beliefs and their teaching confidence, as well as their teaching practice results were -0.12 and -0.01. When their teaching confidence and teaching performance results were compared, they showed only -0.08 relationships.

Table 2: Correlations Among Competency Beliefs, Teaching Confidence and Teaching Practice Results

	Professional competency beliefs	Confidence in teaching	Teaching practice results
Linguistic competency beliefs	0.67 (3.72)*	0.01 (0.04)**	-0.24 (-1.02)**
Professional competency beliefs		-0.12 (-0.50)**	-0.01 (-0.04)**
Confidence in teaching			-0.08 (-0.33)**

*indicates result of the significance level df.=17; $t_{cit.}$=1.74 ; p<0.05

**indicates results of the significance level df.=17; $t_{crit.}$=1.74 ; p>0.05

The significance level of each of these results was also computed. Only trainees' competency beliefs in linguistic and professional knowledge indicated significant relations; that is, t-obs. > t-crit. (df.=17; 3.72>1.74; p<0.05). Non-significant inverse relations were found between their linguistic competency beliefs and teaching practice results (-1.02); between their professional competency beliefs and their confidence in teaching (-0.50); between their professional competency beliefs and their teaching practice results (-0.04); as well as between their confidence in teaching and teaching practice results (-0.33). Another non-significant relationship was found between their linguistic competency beliefs and teaching confidence (0.04).

Analysis of the teaching practice assessment check-list

The focus of the English department 'Teaching Practice Check-list' was analyzed. The checklist contained seven sections. Each of the sections was meant to assess different student-teacher activities. The sections assessed trainees' lesson planning and implementation, their use of gesture, language, classroom procedure and management, methodology, feedback, and other teacher activities. Totally, 35 items were included in the check-list. Although the items were divided into different sections, many of them were related to the assessment of methodology. From the total of 35 items, 28 (80%) referred to methodology, and 7 (20%) assessed the student-teacher's language ability, subject-matter knowledge, way of explanation and content coverage.

Instructors' expectations versus classroom realities

Six English language instructors at BDU who supervised and gave results to trainees were asked about their expectations of the trainees' linguistic ability and methods application in the teaching practice. The instructors had slightly differing expectations and also differing observations of the trainees' performances.

Three of the instructors stated that they expected the trainees to be proficient in language and good at employing the methods they had studied. As reflected in their responses, their expectations were based on the span of time the trainees spent studying the language and the courses they took to develop their language and teaching skills.

Instructor A

> The student-teachers, after a four-year study of English language, were expected to have a sound command of the language. They were especially expected to decrease, if not to avoid, the number of the gravest grammatical errors (both spoken and written) that their students may imitate and use.

> Having been acquainted with the 'modern (up-to-date) methods' of teaching, the trainees, I expected, are able at least to change the 'conventional methods' of teaching and classroom situations to some extent in a way that the learners are encouraged to be involved in the teaching-learning process.

Instructor B

> Having realized that the trainees had taken different types of skill courses such as reading skills, listening skills and spoken English courses, I expected that they would not have any linguistic problem.
>
> Since they had taken the two ELT methodology courses, the trainees, I expected, would have enough theoretical knowledge which may gradually improve through time as they had the opportunity to put the theories into practice.

Instructor C

> I expected the students to be good at English and to have the appropriate skill in the use of classroom techniques.

Based on their observations as supervisors in the teaching practice, instructors A and B evaluated the linguistic competence of most of the trainees as low. Instructor C, however, said that nearly all the trainees he supervised had a reasonable communicative ability.

Regarding the use of the 'up-to-date' methodology or classroom technique, instructors A and C said that it was unsatisfactory, while instructor B appreciated the endeavor. The instructors' responded to the interview as follows:

Instructor A

> On the contrary, to one's surprise, most of the student-teachers I observed were found committing errors that made the meaning of their talk or writing obscure or distorted.
>
> Most of the trainees I observed were found to use nearly the same kinds of techniques and classroom organization as that of the regular teachers. By and large, I couldn't see any sign of transition or shift introduced by the trainees from 'the traditional' way of teaching the language.

Instructor B

> Actually I found some of them competent. However, most of them did not seem to be language teachers because of their poor command of the language.
>
> I appreciate their sticking to the new ELT methodology principles during their practice. They tried to teach those different skills as they were taught how to teach them.

Instructor C

> Nearly all (but one) had a reasonable communicative ability. I found them as expected. ... As for the students' mastery of the subject matter, it appears they are good at it.
>
> Regarding methodology, I observed inappropriate exploitation of the techniques they acquired in class. For example, in a reading lesson that was designed to promote their scanning ability, students were asked to identify those words that should be capitalized. In this regard, it is worth mentioning about the undemocratic nature of the class. The lessons were dominated by teacher talk. The students were limited to receiving what the teacher had to say.

Two other instructors said that they did not expect much from the trainees because of the very limited opportunity of practising time, lack of prior teaching experience, and psychological factors such as

anxiety, lack of confidence, and the feeling (fear) that a supervisor was there to evaluate and offer a grade.

Instructor D

> Before I went out for the evaluation of the teaching practice, I had the expectation that the student- teachers would 'struggle' to go away from the traditional way of teaching.

Instructor E

> I haven't had much expectation due to the short time set up.

These instructors evaluated the language ability and the methods application of the student-teachers as average.

Instructor D

> They were almost successful in applying what they learned in class.... In short, there were factors which affected students' performance; most of the student-teachers were almost successful.

Instructor E

> The way they attempted to handle grammatical items and the way they used communicative repertoire to convey their meanings were found fairly good. They were also competent in the way they planned and implemented their lesson plans.

One of the instructors who responded to the interview did not explicitly put what his expectations were. However, he listed the negative and the positive behaviors he had observed among the student-teachers. He indicated that the trainees had good preparation and presentation of lessons, but lacked language accuracy and confidence in teaching.

Instructor F

> Their negative teaching behavior was in language (spelling, pronunciation, language of explanation). Other problems observed included being unable to give clear instruction at the stages of the lesson, and lack of confidence. On the other hand, their positive teaching behaviors were preparing lesson plan according to the nature of the lesson, treating students' errors in an unthreatening way, preparing additional text so as to fit the presentation of the lesson, showing cooperative-type of teaching and giving exercises.

Student-teachers' expectations versus realities

Nearly all the 10 (42%) interviewed student-teachers had the expectations that the teaching practice would not be difficult for them. They expected that they would practice the communicative methodology (which was the main focus of the English language methodology taught courses) without any problem, and expected success.

For the majority of these student-teachers, however, the classroom situation was not found as expected. For example, two students expressed the classroom realities as follows:

Student A

> But, after I went and met the students the practical situation in the classroom was quite different from my expectation. From my observation the teacher's way of teaching was by far different from what we learnt in theory.

Student B

> I was not in a position to practice what I intended.

As reported, the major problems of the trainees were lack of experience, poor classroom management, unwillingness of high

school students to accept group tasks, lack of student discipline, and the presence of a supervisor in a class.

Discussion

The descriptive statistics on the trainees' competency beliefs and teaching confidence showed that they perceived their professional preparation as high. Their teaching practice results were relatively low.

The correlation statistics about the trainees' competency beliefs in their linguistic ability and professional knowledge revealed a strong positive relationship. The pre-service teachers believed that they were proficient in language skills and were equipped with adequate theoretical background. Their belief matched with the English department's expected outcomes indicated in the department objectives. The department expected the trainees to be proficient in linguistic skills and to be able to share their knowledge, skills, and experiences to their students. The trainees' claim also matched with Florio-Ruane and Lensmire's (1990) findings on pre-service teachers' perceptions concerning their competence. According to these researchers, most pre-service teachers perceived they would be successful in teaching, but perception of this kind was considered as an 'unrealistic optimism'. The trainees' sense of linguistic and methods competence might have emanated from the theoretical doses they took, the duration of their study, and their success in the theory-based examinations.

The main purpose of offering linguistic and methodology courses is to prepare trainees to become good practitioners. The acquired knowledge and skills in both need to have a positive relationship with teaching. Although these trainees believed that they achieved a good deal of theoretical knowledge of methodology and a considerable linguistic competence, it was found that it hardly contributed to confidence building in their teaching. This result did not go in accordance with what researchers indicated. As stated in the

literature, high linguistic and professional competency beliefs increase teacher confidence and facilitate the use of the target language in the classroom (Almarza, 1996). However, as depicted in Table 2, this study indicated that there was almost no relationship. This can be attributed to the trainees' inadequate exposure to practical applications of the theoretical knowledge they gained.

A similar result was found out in the relations between the trainees' linguistic and professional competency beliefs and their teaching practice results. The teaching practice results indicated a non-significant negative relation with the trainees' linguistic competency beliefs. And, a non-significant negative correlation was also found out between the trainees' professional competency beliefs and their teaching practice results. A language teacher needs to have a good language command, a skill of proper application of methods, and a sense of self-confidence (Pine and Boy, 1977). But, trainees' claim of competence has been amazingly unrelated to their confidence in teaching and their teaching practice results. One of the possible causes for this can be that the pre-service teachers were unrealistically optimistic when they expressed about their competence in the two areas. Many teachers feel that they are proficient in language skills and have a sense of mastery of methods, which usually mismatches with actual classroom practices. The other, and probably the main, could be that the trainees did not have adequate micro, peer and/or macro teaching practices.

In addition to the statistical findings, data were gathered by way of descriptive self-report. In this regard, both the instructors (supervisors) and the pre-service teachers were required to describe their expectations versus the classroom realities. The instructors' reports focused on their expectations about the pre-service teachers' linguistic ability and the methods they used while teaching, and how they found these in the practical (classroom) situation. Nearly all the instructors expected the pre-service teachers to be good at English. Besides, they thought that the pre-service teachers would employ the methods and teaching techniques they studied while teaching. The

supervisors' expectations were in accordance with the English department's teaching practice checklist, which emphasized evaluating the trainees' language ability and appropriate use of methods. Their reports, however, unraveled that many of the pre-service teachers possessed low linguistic competence. Quite the majority of these trainees also lacked the desired teaching competence.

The pre-service teachers also reported that their teaching practice did not go in line with their expectations. They expected that they would apply the methodology they were taught to adopt. This initial teaching experience in the practicum, however, did not match their images. This goes in concert with other studies. Johnson (1996), for instance, stated that the realities of the classroom rarely conform to pre-service teachers' expectations or images. She described such a discrepancy as *the gap between …vision and the reality of teaching*. The trainees ascribed the occurrence of the gap to student discipline, management-related situations and the presence of a supervisor to evaluate. This could imply, if these trainees had had the exposure to real classroom situations in the form of practice, the gap between their vision (expectations) and the classroom reality could have been narrowed.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Results from the descriptive statistics indicated that the trainees had high perception about their teaching capacity and professional preparation. Their teaching practice results, however, were relatively low. Although it can be argued that this indication alone may not imply that their teaching capacity was low (for an average of 65.58 may be considered satisfactory University score), the correlation results and the teacher and student interviews, as complementary methods of investigation, also revealed that the trainees had problems in the practicum.

The statistics on correlation indicated a significant relation only between the linguistic and the professional competency beliefs. Non-significant relations were observed among other variables. The responses to the teacher interview showed that many of the supervisors found their students in the practicum incompetent both in language ability and methods use. For the post-practicum interview, the students' responses indicated that they also found their classroom experiences were not up to their expectations. Thus, it may be concluded that the trainees' study focus was rather academic or theoretical knowledge; that is, practical activities and practical proficiency (competence) evaluations were not practiced or were only minimally practised.

Based on the conclusion, then, the following recommendations could be made.

- In order to alleviate the problem seen in the practicum, in addition to the three weeks practice, more practice time as peer and micro-teaching should be organized in the course of training. Such practice may help the trainees to develop their teaching competence and teaching confidence;

- Methodology courses should be designed to integrate awareness and practice in a balanced manner. This may provide trainees with competence in professional ability; and

- The English department, should offer additional skill courses to help the would-be teachers enhance their language capacity.

References

Almarza, G.G. (1996). *Student Foreign Language Teacher's Knowledge Growth*. In **Teacher Learning in Language Teaching.** USA : Cambridge University Press.

Bahir Dar Teachers College: Course Catalogue, (1999) (unpublished).

Baily, K.M. (1998). **Learning about Language Assessment**. USA: Heinle and Heinle Publishers.

Bandura,A. (1995). **Self-Efficacy in Changing Societies**. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Berry, R. (1990). *The Role of Language Improvement in In-service Teacher Training: Killing Two Birds with One Stone*. **System**, 18/1: 97-105.

Blanton, W.E. and Moorman, G.B. (1987). *The Effects of Knowledge on the Instructional Behavior of Classroom Teachers. A Review of Research on Teacher Beliefs and Practices*. **Educational Research,** 30/1: 47-60.

Brookhart, S.M. and Donald J.F. (1992). *Characteristics of Entering Teacher Candidates*. **Review of Educational Research,** 62/1: 37-60.

Brown, R.W. (1990). *The Place of Beliefs and Concept Formation in a Language Teacher Training Theory*. **System,** 18/ 1: 85-96.

Couch, J.V. (1982). **Fundamentals of Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences**. USA: St. Martin's Press, Inc.

Deford, D. (1985). *Validating the Construct of Theoretical Orientation in Reading Instruction*. **Reading Research Quarterly,** 20: 351-367.

Ellis, R. (1986). *Activities and Procedures for Teacher Preparation*. **English Language Teaching Journal**, 40: 91-99.

Ericksen, S. (1984). **The Essence of Good Teaching.** San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Fang, Z. (1996). *A Review of Research on Teacher Beliefs and Practices*. **Educational Research,** 30/1: 47-60.

Florio-Ruane, S. and Lensmire, T.J. (1990). *Transforming Future Teachers' Ideas about Writing Instruction*. **Journal of Curriculum Studies,** 22: 277-289.

Freeman, D. and Richards, J. C. (1996). (ed.) **Teacher Learning in Language Teaching**. USA: Cambridge University Press.

Gibson, S. and Dembo,M. (1984). *Teacher Efficacy: A Construct Validation*. **Journal of Educational Psychology,** 76: 569-582.

Goodman, J. (1988). *Constructing a Practical Philosophy of Teaching. A study of Teachers' Professional Perspectives*. **Teaching and Teacher Education,** 4:121-137.

Johnson, K.E. (1996). *The Vision Versus the Reality: The Tensions of the TESOL Practicum*. In **Teacher Learning in Language Teaching.** USA: Cambridge University Press.

Kagan, D.M. (1952). *Professional Growth Among Preservice and Beginning Teachers*. **Review of Educational Research,** 62: 129-169.

_____ (1992). *Implications of Research on Teacher Belief*. **Educational Psychologist,** 27: 65-90.

Kessler, C. (1992). **Cooperative Language Learning.** New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

McDiarmid, G.W. *et.al.* (1989). **Why Staying One Chapter Ahead Does not Really Work: Subject Specific Pedagogy. The Knowledge-Base for Beginning Teachers.** Elmsoford, N.Y.: Pergamon.

Pajares, F. (1996). *Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Mathematical Problem-Solving of Gifted Students*. **Contemporary Educational Psycholog**y, 21: 325-344.

Pigge,F. (1978). *Teacher Competencies: Need, Proficiency and Where the Proficiency was Developed*. **Journal of Educational Research**, 71: 12-18.

Pine, G. J. and Boy, A.V. (1977). **Learner Centred Teaching: a Humanistic View.** Denvor, Colorado: Love Publishing Co.

Proceedings of the First Workshop on Teaching Practice. Sept, 1997; Kotebe College of Teacher Education Addis Ababa (unpublished).

Reynolds, A. (1992). *What is Competent Beginning Teaching? A Review of Literature*. **Review of Educational Research**, 62/1: 1-35.

Richards, J.C. and Lockhart, C. (1994). **Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms.** USA : Cambridge University Press.

Schön, D.A. (1983). **The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action**. London: Temple Smith.

Wallace, M.J. (1991). **Training Foreign Language Teachers. A Reflective Approach**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Williams, M. (1994). **Action and Reflection in Teacher Education.** UK: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Williams, M. and Burden, R.L. (1997). **Psychology for Language Teachers: A Social Constructivist Approach.** UK: Cambridge University Press.

Woolfolk, A.E. and Hoy, W. (1990). *Prospective Teachers' Sense of Efficacy and Beliefs about Control*. **Journal of Educational Psychology,** 82/1: 81-91.