

Comprehensiveness of Learning Outcomes Formulated in the Newly Designed Ethiopian Primary School Teacher Education Courses

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the comprehensiveness of learning objectives formulated in the newly developed primary school teacher education courses in Ethiopia. Data were collected using documents of 124 course syllabi and questionnaire from 23 teacher educators, and interview with a curriculum consultant. Findings revealed that the three learning outcomes were not given equal attention by course developers. The cognitive domain was overemphasized, whereas psychomotor and affective were found to be de-emphasized in the 10 fields of study, Pedagogical Content Knowledge, Content Knowledge, general education, bridging, practicum and common courses and six departments. Moreover, the learning outcomes formulated in Civic and Ethical education, Art, Music and Health and Physical Education courses did not meet expectations. Results also revealed that only 22% of the courses were found to be comprehensive in their learning objectives. Implications suggest that course and program developers were not critically concerned about the issue of learning outcome comprehensiveness for different reasons such as lack of knowledge, experience, professional concern, commitment and shortage of time on the part of course designers and absence of close professional supervision and less attention given for issue on the part of the Ministry of Education.

Keywords: Learning outcomes, Comprehensiveness of learning outcomes, Newly developed Ethiopian primary school teacher education course syllabi

Introduction

In its modern education system Ethiopia has a number of different curricular documents. They include primary school teacher education curriculum framework, general education national curriculum framework, secondary education curriculum, primary school curriculum, course syllabus and student textbooks. All these curricular documents are expected to have comprehensive learning outcomes.

This means cognitive, psychomotor and affective learning outcomes are expected to be treated as much as possible based on the nature of the contents treated (Ministry Of Education [MOE], 2013). Similarly, Lobo (2013) noted that teachers and those who work on a curriculum must always put the three domains together for the holistic development of learners. If this is so, the educational objectives are taken to be comprehensive. This should be true at all levels of educational pyramid including teacher education.

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When we critically analyze 1994 education and training policy and primary school teacher education curriculum framework of Ethiopia, the learning outcomes stated in these curricular documents are comprehensive (Federal Democratic Republic Government Ethiopia [FDRGE], 1994). This implies that the learning outcomes formulated at courses level should also be comprehensive, because MOE (2003) noted that education and training policy and teacher education curriculum guide lines are the references in determining objectives of a program, course objectives and graduate profiles.

If learning outcomes stated in a given curricular document are incomprehensive, students will not experience holistic development. Sharing this idea, Lobo (2013) and ITECH (2010) pointed out that holistic development of learners will be achieved if the three domains work together. Hence, the question of learning outcome comprehensiveness is a very critical curricular issue that should be given due attention by the concerned bodies.

As from 2011, Ethiopian primary school teacher education system curriculum was revised. Consequently, different curricular documents such as pre-service primary school teacher education curriculum framework and course syllabi were developed at a national level. In all these course syllabi learning outcomes are expected to be clearly indicated for each course comprehensively.

Escobar (2013) noted that balancing cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains is crucial in making education transformative, sustainable and holistic, but that some curriculum developers and implementers give more emphasis to cognitive, psychomotor or affective aspects. Similarly, Jacobsen, et al. (1989) as cited in MOE (2013) reported that 80 - 90% of the average elementary and secondary students' school time is devoted to the achievement of cognitive domains. Again MOE (2010) noted that previous Ethiopian schooling curricula were found not to give sufficient emphasis on affective issues.

Because of the very nature of the contents, it might be necessary to give more emphasis either for cognitive, affective or psychomotor learning domains in a curriculum. For example, in the Ethiopian Civic and ethical education blue print from the nine profiles set for 10+3 graduates, 88.89% of them are affective aspects (MOE, 2007). Rosario (2013) also noted that for character education emphasis could be given for affective domains. On the other hand, Vinson (2014) pointed out that in Art and Music courses emphasis should be given to psychomotor issues.

Learning outcomes formulated at the curriculum framework level of Ethiopian teacher education are comprehensive (MOE, 2010). The researcher had the opportunity to evaluate different plans of Begemdir College of Teacher Education (BCTE). However, in all the evaluated curricular documents, learning outcomes were found not to be comprehensive. However, regarding course syllabi, the reality might be different. Therefore, whether or not the newly developed primary school teacher education course objectives are comprehensive, and whether the learning outcomes stated in Art,

Music, Civic and ethical education and Physical Education courses are in line with the very nature of the courses are critical curricular issues that should be addressed via research. However, to the researcher's knowledge, there are no local research findings which show the current reality of these issues. At the time of the present study, the mentioned courses were to be implemented for the first time at the national level. This is the motivation behind the current research.

The aims of the current study are threefold. First, to identify which learning domains are emphasized, and which are deemphasized; second, to investigate whether or not course learning outcome comprehensiveness was a critical professional issue in developing the new primary school teacher education curriculum; and third, to assess whether or not Civic and Ethical Education, Art, Music, Health and Physical Education course objectives were as they were originally intended.

To reach this aim, the following research questions were developed.

1. Which type of learning outcome domain is overemphasized and de-emphasized in the newly developed Ethiopian primary school teacher education courses?
2. Which types and how many of the newly developed Ethiopian primary school teacher education courses are comprehensive and incomprehensive in their learning outcomes?
3. Are the learning outcomes stated in the newly developed Ethiopian primary school teacher education Art, Music, Civic and Ethical Education and Physical Education courses in line with the nature of the courses?
4. Was learning outcome comprehensiveness a critical issue during the determination objectives in the newly designed primary school teacher education courses? If not why?

Method

The study is a descriptive survey type. Regarding sample size and sampling technique, 124 newly developed major courses, 23 teacher educators from four Amhara CTEIs (College of Teacher Education Institutions) and one curriculum development national consultant on the part of MOE were the samples of the study. Comprehensive sampling was used to select sample courses. Among ten Amhara CTEIs, four were selected purposively since they were found more accessible and convenient to gather data. From these four purposively selected colleges total of 5 teacher educators, who participated in developing the courses were selected using convenient sampling. One curriculum development consultant was selected purposefully for similar reason. Again 18 teacher educators were randomly selected from Begemdir College of Teacher Education because of its access.

Data collection instruments

Document analysis was employed as a main tool to gather the data. Interview and self-developed questionnaire were also used as a supportive data gathering tools. The purpose of the questionnaire was to assess teacher educators' expectation about the share of the three learning domains in the newly designed primary school teacher education course objectives whereas the purpose of the interview was to get data about whether the issue of learning outcome comprehensiveness was the concern of newly developed primary school teacher education course developer or not.

Data collection procedures

First 124 courses' syllabi were printed out and were categorized into six themes based on the national curriculum framework of primary school teacher education. Next, all of the course objectives were analyzed critically and judged whether they are cognitive, affective or psychomotor in their very nature by the researcher and 15 purposively selected teacher educators of BCTE. The researcher took feedbacks from each analyzer and made the final decision for the third time which was taken for analysis.

Data analysis procedures

Data obtained from 124 course syllabi, 23 teacher educators and one curriculum development consultant were analyzed and interpreted qualitatively and quantitatively based on their nature. Analysis was made at ten fields of studies, six course thematic areas, overall curriculum of the program and six departments. In doing so frequency count, percentage, rank ordering, theme classification and narration were used to analyze the data.

Results and Discussion

In all course types it is the cognitive learning outcome domains that take the lion share when compared with psychomotor and affective domains. This implies that cognitive learning outcomes are the most highly emphasized followed by psychomotor whereas affective domain is the least emphasized. Such results are in harmony with what MOE (2010), Escobar (2013) and Vinson (2014) reported. However, they are against what is recommended by (Lobo, 2013) and (Pindog, 2013). Because these scholars noted that giving more emphasis to a single learning outcome domain is an issue of compromising the holistic development of learners (see Table 1).

Table 1.
Proportion of the Three Learning Outcomes Domains in Different Course Types

Course type	Number of course objectives	Cognitive		Affective		Psychomotor	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Bridging	115	99	86.07	1	0.87	15	13.04
General education	56	38	67.86	15	26.79	3	5.36
Common	20	17	85	2	10	1	5
English PCK	52	32	61.54	8	15.39	12	20.08
English SMK	41	26	63.41	4	9.76	11	26.83
Mathematics & environmental science PCK	24	20	83.33	1	4.17	3	12.5
Mathematics & Environmental science SMK	142	99	69.76	12	8.45	31	21.83
Amharic PCK	17	14	82.35	0	0	3	17.65
Amharic SMK	25	22	88	0	0	3	12
Music PCK	21	8	38.1	5	23.81	8	38.1
Music SMK	43	26	60.47	5	16.28	12	27.91
Health &Physical Education PCK	21	10	47.62	0	0	11	52.38
Health &Physical Education SMK	22	17	77.27	3	13.64	2	9.09
Art PCK	39	15	38.46	11	28.21	13	33.33
Art and SMK	24	9	37.5	6	25	9	37.5
Mathematics PCK	7	7	100	0	0	0	0
Mathematics SMK	54	48	88.89	0	0	6	11.11
Integrated Natural Science PCK	11	8	72.73	0	0	3	27.27
Integrated Natural Science SMK	204	156	76.5	20	9.9	28	13.8
Integrated Social Science PCK	8	6	75	0	0	2	25
Integrated Social Science SMK	46	38	82.61	4	8.70	3	6.52
Civic and Ethical Education PCK	24	20	83.33	4	16.67	0	0
Civic and Ethical Education SMK	59	47	79.66	11	18.64	1	1.7
Total	n	1075	782	112		180	

The results in Table 1, also revealed that Music, Health and Physical Education, Art and Civic and Ethical Education courses were found giving more emphasis to cognitive learning outcome domains which is against their very nature. Hence Music, Art, Health and Physical Education courses are expected to have learning outcomes which emphasize psychomotor learning outcome whereas Civic and Ethical Education courses are expected to have objectives which emphasize on affective domains because of their very nature.

The results regarding Music, Art, Health and Physical Education course learning outcome is against what Vinson (2014) suggested. However, all PCK courses of Health and Physical Education have psychomotor domains, which is pedagogical and recommendable. Hence in their very nature Physical Education courses are designed to improve the psychomotor skills of learners. Similarly the results found for civic and ethical education are against the very nature of the course, what is set in the Ethiopian civic and ethical education blue print (MOE, 2007) and reported by (Rosario, 2013). The overall results imply that learning objectives at curriculum level are against with what is suggested in our education and training policy because the policy gives emphasis to affective issues.

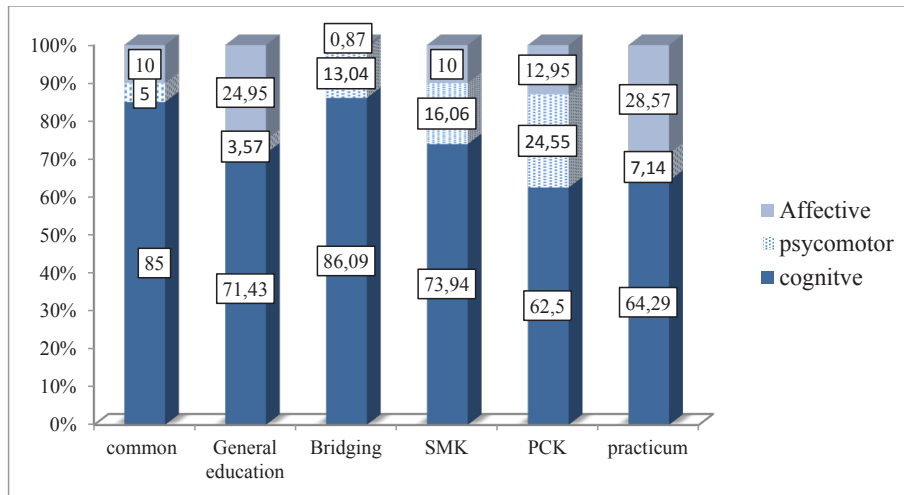


Figure 1. Over all proportion of the three learning outcomes in six course thematic areas

Figure 1 disclosed that in all the six thematic areas it is the cognitive domains that got more emphasis than the affective and psychomotor aspects. Such results are in harmony with what MOE (2010) & Escobar (2013) reported. Moreover, this result is similar with what was obtained from the interview and the questionnaire. Affective learning outcomes are the key for the achievement of both cognitive and affective learning outcomes even though they are the least emphasized. However, the overlooking culture of affective domains in primary school teacher education curricula is an issue of compromising the quality our educational system.

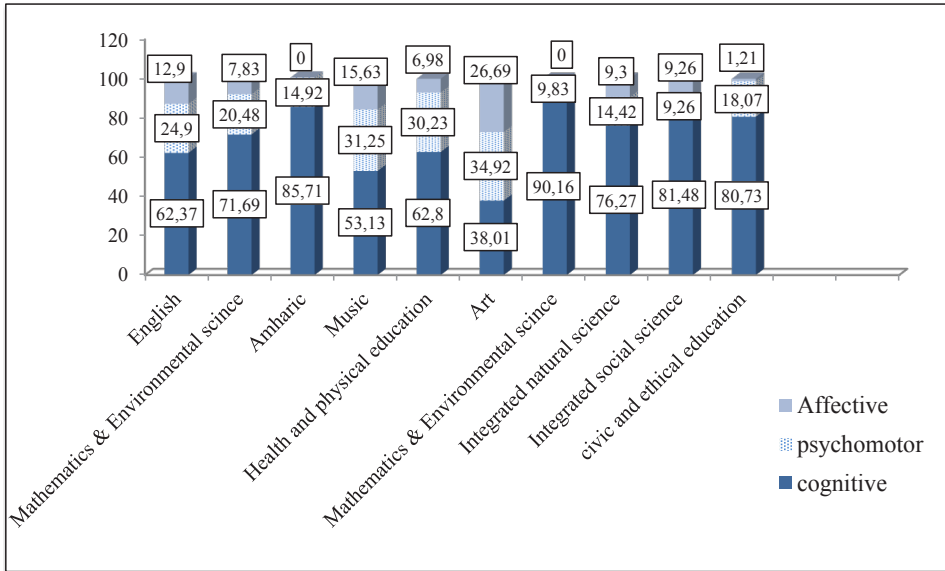


Figure 2. Overall proportion of the three learning outcomes in ten fields of study

As one can see from the results presented in Figure 2, it is the cognitive learning domain which gets more emphasis in all the ten fields of study than psychomotor and affective domains. Hence it accounts for 90.16% and 38.01% of Mathematics & environmental and Art field of study course objectives respectively. These results are consistent with what Escobar (2013), MOE (2010), MOE (2013) and Lobo (2013) have reported. On the other hand if we compare psychomotor and affective domains of learning it is the psychomotor learning outcome which gets relatively more emphasis than the affective in all fields of study except Civic and ethical education and integrated social science.

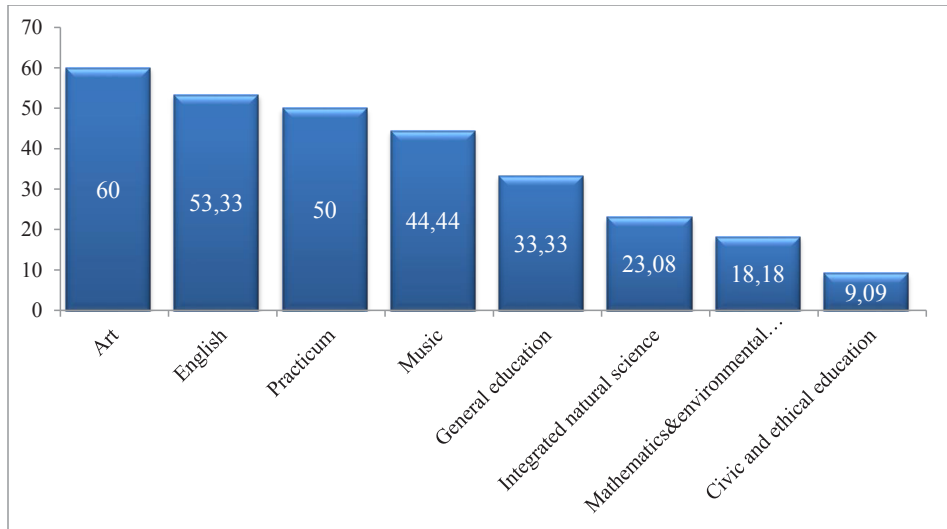


Figure 3. Proportion of comprehensive course types

Results presented in Figure 3 indicate that 6(60%) & 1(9.09%) of Art and Civic & ethical education courses respectively were found comprehensive but Amharic, Mathematics, Health & Physical Education and integrated social science related courses were found totally incomprehensive. These results show that in terms of their comprehensiveness Art & civic and ethical education course are the 1st and 8th in rank respectively. Therefore course types like Art have best experiences to be scaled up for other course by primary school teacher education course developers.

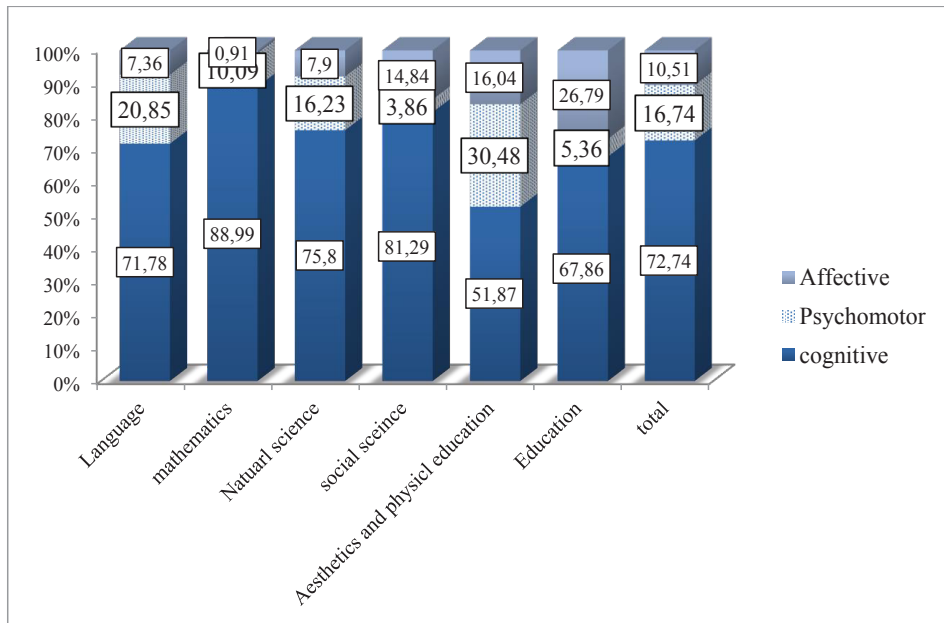


Figure 4. Over all proportion of the three learning outcomes across six departments

As indicated in figure 4, the share of the cognitive learning outcome domains in the overall course objectives of the entire six departments was found greater than the other two domains. From the data we can also understand that it is the Mathematics department courses which gave more emphasis to cognitive domains than other departments. Moreover, it is possible to infer that education department courses are in a better position in addressing affective learning outcomes followed by Aesthetic and Physical Education. On the other hand Aesthetic and Physical Education department courses are in better position in addressing psychomotor domains.

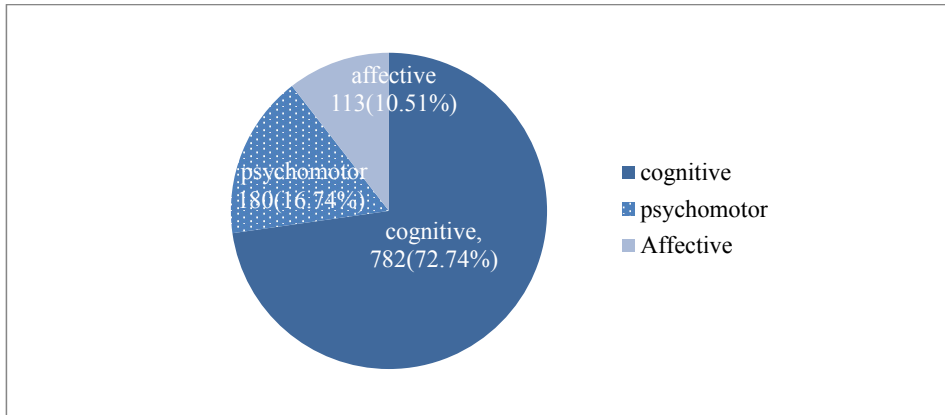


Figure 5. Overall proportion of the three learning outcomes in the analyzed courses

As shown in figure 5, from the total 1075 course objectives of the newly developed Ethiopian primary school teacher education, the proportion of cognitive, psychomotor and affective learning domains was found 782 (72.74%), 180 (16.74%) and 113(10.51%) respectively which is similar to the results searched out across the six thematic areas and ten fields of study. Therefore it is the cognitive learning domain which gets more emphasis in the newly developed primary school teacher education curriculum while less emphasis was given to psychomotor and affective issues. These results are consistent with what (MOE, 2010), (MOE, 2013) and (Escobar, 2013) reported.

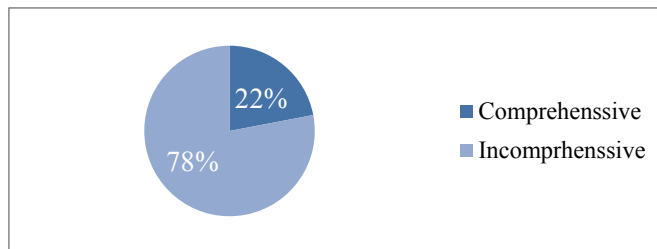


Figure 6. Over all proportion of comprehensive and incomprehensive courses

Results presented in figure 6 show that from the total 124 analyzed courses, 27(22%) of them are found comprehensive in their learning objectives whereas 97 (78%) of them are incomprehensive. The incomprehensiveness of such significant number of course objectives might not be really caused by the very nature of the courses but by the lack of professional attention, concern, commitment and knowledge on the part of the developers. However, from pedagogical and professional point of view

such results are shocking and frustrating. Because in the presence of such significant de-emphasis for the affective and psychomotor learning outcomes it might be unimaginable to ensure the quality of primary school teacher education and in turn that of primary schooling. Supporting this idea Escobar (2013) reported that overemphasizing just one domain can be defeating of the very purpose of learning.

Results of interviews

All teacher educator interviewees reported that learning outcome comprehensiveness was not a critical agenda in formulating the newly developed primary school teacher education course objectives on the part of MOE and themselves. Regarding the overall concern about the comprehensiveness of course objectives the consultant pointed out that the intention on their part was to make objectives comprehensive but he believed that they didn't address their intention explicitly and officially for course objective formulators. This implies that learning outcome comprehensiveness was not a critical issue in determining course objectives on the part of most concerned bodies.

The interviewees also reported that among some course developers there were professional dialogues that could indicate their sense of responsibility and professionalism while few were dialoging to address their group and individual interest. One of the interviewee coined such personal and group interest as **"ሙያዊ ያልሆነ የኮርስ ወገናዊነት [Unprofessional sense of course ownership]:"** The driving force for such unethical ownership could be the issue of "Cash cow". Supporting this idea one interviewee surprisingly reported that some course developers were not only attacked each other ideally but also showed physical attacks **" የሀይላንድ ላሰቲክ እስከመራወር የደረሱ ነበሩ [there were some teacher educators who thrown highland plastic to each other]:"** But such type of approach is really unethical, non-professional, illogical and even inhuman.

Most interviewees reported that course designers were highly concerned about the issue of content coverage, inclusion of courses and credit hour assignment for a number of reasons by overlooking course objective comprehensiveness. Regarding this idea the consultant argued that though the reflection of personal and group interest was expected to happen it was not as such severe as the past.

Interviewees believed that the reasons for the existence of minimal attention for the comprehensiveness of course objectives could be lack of knowledge, lack of experiences, shortage of time, low professional sense of responsibility, high concern for personal and group interest on the part of teacher educators, absence of accountability system and absence of close support and professional direction from MOE and consultants. The reasons could be themed as teacher educator, MOE and consultant related.

Regarding the support expected from MOE except one of the interviewees others reported that no professional and close support was provided on the part of MOE in-

cluding the curriculum development consultants in designing course objectives. However, the consultant disagrees with this idea.

Results obtained from questionnaire

As shown in Table 2, teacher educators expect that in the newly developed primary school teacher education courses it is the cognitive learning outcome that takes the high and very high share among the formulated objectives followed by psychomotor and affective domains respectively. These results are in line with what was obtained from document analysis and interview.

As reported by most respondents the reasons for the higher proportion of cognitive and lower one of psychomotor and affective domain was that the curriculum of primary school teacher education course contents mainly focus on subject matter mastery rather than skill and value development. However, the consultant interviewee reported that the curriculum framework was designed to achieve the three learning outcomes simultaneously.

Table 2.

Teacher Educators' Expectation About the Proportion of the Three Learning Outcomes

Learning outcome type	very low		low		high		very high	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Cognitive	1	5.56	1	5.56	7	38.89	12	66.67
Psychomotor	2	11.11	4	22.22	4	22.22	4	22.22
Affective	2	11.11	10	55.56	5	27.78	1	5.56

Conclusions

To summarize, ten fields of study, PCK, SMK and six departments' courses cognitive learning outcomes were the most highly emphasized whereas affective domains were the least emphasized. Art, Music, Health and Physical Education and Civic and ethical education courses were not found as they are expected ideally in addressing the three domains of learning based on their very nature. 60% & 9.09% of Art and Civic & Ethical Education courses respectively were found comprehensive while Amharic, Mathematics and integrated social science were found totally incomprehensive. The Aesthetic and Physical Education department was found relatively more comprehensive than the other departments in its course objectives. 27 (21.77%) and 97 (78.23%) of the total analyzed courses were found comprehensive and incomprehensive respectively. Learning outcome comprehensiveness was not a critical agenda in formulating the objectives on the part of the concerned bodies for different reasons like lack of

knowledge, concern, attention, commitment and personal and/or group interest.

Primary school teacher education course syllabi developers should pay due attention for the comprehensiveness of learning outcomes. Teacher educators need to fill the learning outcome comprehensiveness gap in preparing and implementing modules. Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Amharic and Health and Physical Education course curriculum developers should heartily believe that these courses have the potential to address the affective domain. Primary school teacher educators should develop courses and syllabi professionally, ethically and with great sense of responsibility by controlling their personal and group interest. MOE should be highly concerned about the issue of primary school teacher education course learning outcome comprehensiveness. It should also give clear instruction and must have some guide lines and standards about the formulation of course objectives and closely monitor and evaluate the process of primary school teacher education course syllabus development but if it fails to do so it should delegate the responsibility to regional education bureaus. Moreover, it should give short term training that capacitate the course syllabus development competence of teacher educators and design accountability system for the problems that happen during syllabi development.

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