

# Innovations

## Exploring mentors exaggerated and indiscriminate evaluation of mentees in Tabor Primary school

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***Abstract:** The main objective of this study was to explore mentors' exaggerated evaluation of mentees in Tabor Primary school. To this effect, explanatory case study was employed and an in-depth interview, focus group discussion and non-participant observation were used. Data was gathered from five purposively selected teacher participants and one informant. Then the collected data was analyzed and interpreted qualitatively. As it was revealed in the findings, lack of training, inadequate incentive, assigning large number of mentees to one mentor, lack of intimate partnership between colleges and primary schools, existence of loose relationship between college practicum unit and primary schools, lack of specific and clear evaluation criterion, inadequate time allocation for practicum were found to be the major factors contributing to the existence of inflated and indiscriminate marking. It could be concluded that mentoring has not been going in the right track as envisaged. Thus, it could be recommended that concerned stake holders especially, colleges, Woreda education offices and regional education bureau officials should work hard to alleviate the above-mentioned problems.*

**Key Words:** 1. Mentoring, 2. Mentor, 3. Mentee, 4. Evaluation

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### Introduction

#### Background of the study

Education is believed to be the basis for people's holistic development. To bring about this development, it is vital to produce competent and capable citizens. This attempt will be realized by providing quality education to teacher trainees (student-teachers). To achieve this objective, Ministry of education at the Federal level and Amhara Regional Education Bureau at the regional level have been giving due attention to quality education in Ethiopia. For example, Ministry of education called for a complete overhaul which produced a frame work which details strategies to address the problems in the education system of the country and enhance quality of teacher education (MOE, 2003). One of the strategies is the paradigm shift in the pre-service teacher education program and one of the mission

statements of the new education program is its commitment to produce competent teaching staff that has the required academic knowledge, professional skill, appropriate citizenship, attitudes and ethical values enshrined in the country's constitution (BDU, 2011). AREB has also announced that its major concern is to achieve quality in the education system in the region. To attain this objective, AREB has introduced quality education package which incorporates TDP, CPD, SIP, LIP, Civic and Ethical education program and general education quality improvement (GEQIP) (Gondar College of Teacher Education, 2010). Moreover, it is apparent that the government has been showing firm political commitment to bring about quality education. Even though the above attempts have been made, primary school teachers (mentors) have been repeatedly found to give students an exaggerated and indiscriminate mark which is against the effort to bring about quality in the education system and this is why the investigator is initiated to undertake a study in this area.

### **Statement of the problem**

Research findings indicate that school teachers have been observed giving exaggerated and indiscriminate marks to their mentees (student-teachers). This problem is not a one-time incidence but the incidence of many repeated years. In support of this idea, a study undertaken by the education faculty of BahirDar University in 2011 has assured that there exists inflated marking with respect to students' practicum evaluation. Similarly, a study conducted by Dereje Taye in 2009 has confirmed that mark inflation is one of the problems which have been negatively affecting the implementation of the so-called practicum. Therefore, to identify the causes and suggest possible solutions, the researcher has developed the following research questions.

1. Why do primary school teachers (mentors) give exaggerated marks to their mentees (student-teachers)?
2. Why do primary school teachers (mentors) give indiscriminate marks to their mentees (student-teachers)?
3. How do primary school teachers (mentors) perceive the class room teaching practice of mentees?
4. What should be done to minimize and gradually solve primary school teachers exaggerated and indiscriminate marking of their mentees?

### **Objectives of the study**

The general objective of this study is to explore mentors exaggerated and indiscriminate evaluation in Tabor Primary school

The specific objectives are to:

1. Identify the causes behind giving exaggerated marks
2. Explore the causes behind giving indiscriminate marks
3. Analyze mentees' teaching practice in the class room
4. To suggest possible solutions to the above-mentioned problems

### **Significance of the study**

This study is assumed to be significant for the following individuals

- Primarily it will be important for primary school teachers (mentors) to critically see and modify their evaluation system and mark mentees according to the capacity
- It may provide some information for college teachers to create closer attachment with primary school teachers and attend mentees' performance adequately
- It may offer some information for stake holders engaged in the area of education to give due attention for the implementation of practicum
- It may provide an understanding for student-teachers to critically see themselves on how they are performing the class room teaching practice

### **Delimitation of the study**

Despite the fact that there are a number of primary schools in Debre tabor Town, time, financial and energy constraints will geographically limit the study to be carried out in Tabor primary school. Conceptually, this study is delimited to the exploration of mentors exaggerated and indiscriminate evaluation of student-teachers.

### **Operational Definition of Terms**

**Mentoring:** Support to be offered to mentees

**Mentor:** primary school teacher who offers support, guidance and evaluation to his/her mentees

**Mentee:** student-teacher who is engaged in teaching practice in primary schools

**Inflated:** exaggerated evaluation

**Indiscriminate marking:** giving equal marks to almost all student-teachers

### **Review of related literature**

#### **Meaning and concepts of practicum**

The term practicum is a period of intensively focused practical application of classroom and text book theories and case studies to the actual work environment (Cameron and Wilson, 1993). It is an opportunity to integrate career related experiences that complement what is learnt in the class room into the field of education by participating in planned and supervised work. It involves working in a certain field. It has different names indifferent contexts like cooperative education, internship, externship and apprenticeship. Here, practicum the actual school experience is recognized as an important aspect of the training of the future school teachers, directors and supervisors who are counselors, leaders and managers of the instructional activities at the grass root (school, classroom) level. Their future roles involve a cycle of day-to-day planning, implementing and evaluating which in

turn needs strongly interwoven theoretical knowledge and practical skills through in-campus and off-campus learning.

Practicum is supervised by professionals at school and/or off campus and usually overseen by specific course instructors. According to Jack, 2003, practicum is not an independent teaching experience; it can be supervised and given feedback by college instructors and mentors. That is, evidence must be provided and documented in areas of class instruction and a range of supervisory and reflective experiences must be made.

In teaching, practicum should be designed to give students' actual teaching practice and developmental feedback. Student-teachers should be involved in course planning, implementation as well as assessment of their students and of the course throughout the semester (MOE, 2003). Unlike the past practicum which involves very little in the way of allowing student teachers to develop their practical skills and organizations, the existing practicum is designed to ensure that student teachers have as much supported experience as possible before they enter the class room as a qualified teacher.

The existing practicum allows teachers to practice teaching in their respective areas; tryout ideas; have the confidence to make mistakes and to reflect and learn from them in order to develop new strategies. An essential development of practicum is the continual support and guidance offered to each student-teacher by a tutor from college and from mentor at the partner school (MOE, 2003).

### **The role of a mentor**

Mentor is a key person to the success of practicum implementation. According to TESO document this person is in the best position to advise on planning, classroom management and to give daily feedback to the student-teachers. To attain this purpose, the mentor should have to gain detailed knowledge and understanding of children in the class and to advise and guide on the appropriateness of planned activities, the observation and assessment of the children's learning.

Accordingly, McIntyre, et al. 1994 stated that mentor's role could usually be seen as having four main elements:

- Working directly with the student-teachers in various ways, for instance, collaborative teaching, observation and feedbacks. Besides, Rhodes et al., 2004 posited that observation by a mentor has to be in the gift of the learner and require three steps (pre-observation, observation and post observation)
- Managing student-teachers' learning about teaching in collaboration with teacher Education institution and drawing appropriately on department colleagues' classes and their expertise
- Assessing student-teachers' class room teaching and their capacity to evaluate and develop their teaching for formative and summative purposes
- providing personal support to student teachers which will often experience both inequality and failure

### **Characteristics of effective mentors**

Mentoring has two applications to improve the ways in which people become effective school teachers. The first of these is related to the identification of individuals who would serve as appropriate role models for beginning school teachers. It is essential that these individuals be able to provide feedback to beginners regarding the extent to which they have been able to master technical skills associated with the performance of effective teaching. The second value of the concept of mentoring mentees is found in its application to formation. Mentoring is absolutely important part of the professional development phase for the would-be teachers

There are however, distinct differences between the duties and of only a role model with those of a mentor. A role model may be seen as a who is consulted periodically by the novice as a way to learn how to construct a master schedule for a school observe a teacher, conduct a student-parent conference or perform many other daily activities, in much the same way that an apprentice may learn practical from a master carpenter or electrician. On the other hand, a mentor goes beyond this modeling function by serving as a person who is inclined to prod the beginner to learn how to do something according to his/her personal experience skills and talents. In short, mentors should raise more questions than provide answers to the people with whom they interact

The following list represents characteristics that mentees should consider when choosing a mentor. The first one is that mentors must have experiences as mentees. They should be regarded by their peers and others as being effective. They must demonstrate good oral and written communication skills, intelligence in understanding the past, present, and future situation, acceptance of multiple alternative solutions to complex problems, clarity of vision and the ability to share that vision with others, well-developed interpersonal skills and sensitivities, enthusiasm that is sincere, convincing and, most important constantly conveyed to their mentees' ability to communicate to others, a clear picture of their personal attitudes, values and ethical standards, the ability to communicate sensitively, the type of feedback that is needed regarding mentees' development and progress towards desirable standards of competence and professional behavior, the ability to listen sensitively to their mentees' ideas, doubts, and enthusiastic outpourings, a caring attitude a belief in their mentees' potential, flexibility and a sense of humor and a restrained sense of guidance. Moreover, mentors need to able to ask the right questions and not just provide right answers all the time. They must accept another way of doing things and avoid the temptation and tendency to tell beginners that the way to do something is the way I used to do it. Furthermore, mentors need to model the principles of continuous learning and reflection. They must exhibit an awareness of the political and social realities of life in a school system, that is, they must know the real way that things get done. The superintendent must verify that the mentor has the aforementioned qualities described by signing the agreement.

### **Responsibilities of Mentors**

**Advising:** The mentor responds to a protégé's need to gain additional information needed to carry out a job effectively.

**Communicating:** The mentor works consistently to ensure that open lines of communication always exist between him and the protégé

**Counseling:** The mentor provides needed emotional support to the protégé

**Guiding:** Mentors work to orient and acquaint the new administrator with the formal and informal norms of a particular school system

**Modeling:** A mentor serves as a true role model to the protégé by consistently demonstrating professional and competent performance

**Protecting:** The mentor serves as a buffer between the protégé and those who might wish to detract from the beginner's performance

**Developing skills:** The mentor assists the protégé in learning the skills needed to carry out the job effectively

**Time and caring:** the mentor must be willing to provide the time that a beginning administrator may talk about job related concerns. Perhaps the most important thing anyone can do as a mentor is to be available when needed by the protégé not to fix problems but, rather, to indicate that someone cares about the beginner

### **Methodology**

The methodology part of this study deals with the research design, sampling, data collection, procedures of data collection and methods of data analysis

### **Design of the study**

The design of this study employed qualitative approach. The rationale for selecting qualitative research approach is that it is preferable to explore a problem and have detailed understanding of it. This approach is also preferable to understand the setting in which participants in a study address a problem. It is also used to empower respondents to share their experiences and stories, hear their voices and to write the study in a flexible way (Creswell, 2007)

Of the many qualitative approaches, case study was selected and used in this study. The main reason that compelled the researcher to choose case study method is that its basic assumptions and procedures are found to be pertinent to the intent of this study. In the first place, its naturalistic feature has helped the researcher to immerse himself with research participants in their natural settings. So, the researcher was able to exploit an in-depth data. Secondly, since case study is carried out over a long period of time, it gives the researcher the opportunity to understand and interpret it from different perspectives (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Moreover, case study is the best method to approach and tap an enriched and resourceful data from the mentors' lifelong experiences and it is flexible and more effective method to obtain the required information and it is carried out with less technical facilities.

### **Population and sampling**

The populations of this study were mentors who teach in Tabor primary school. This school is selected for the study because it is accessible and accommodates mentors or teachers who having a long period of experience in mentoring student-teachers. The other criterion which compelled the researcher to select this school is that the researcher has a long period of acquaintance with most mentors teaching

there. Before selecting the required sample, a letter for asking permission was given to the school director and the objective of the study was told to him. There are 78 teachers in the school. From this figure, five individual participant teachers were selected purposively by using criterion based purposeful sampling method. The criteria used here were experience, acquaintance and accessibility. The selected participants were believed to have long period of experience in mentoring and the researcher has long period of acquaintance with and the research site is accessible to the place where the researcher lives

Regarding their educational background, four participants were diploma holders and one participant was a degree holder. To obtain adequate and dependable data about mentors' evaluation system of their mentees, information was gathered from the respondents teaching in Tabor primary school.

### **Data collecting tools**

To collect dependable data, interview, focus group discussion and observation were employed in this study.

### **Interview**

In this study an in-depth interview was used to gather data from research participants. It is an important tool because it is adaptable to various circumstances (Creswell, 2007). More over the reason why an in-depth interview is pertinent to this study is that participants are resourceful in their mentoring experiences accumulated for a long period of time. Thus, to dig out and enriched and detailed information, an in-depth interview assumed to appropriate to this study and this instrument was developed from the literature reviewed.

### **Focused group discussion**

In this study focused group discussion was employed to triangulate the data gathered through the in-depth interview.

### **Procedures of data collection**

Before the actual data collection was carried out pilot study was conducted on three mentors other than those selected for the study and some modifications were made accordingly.

### **Conducting and Recording the Interview**

Before selecting the required sample, a letter for asking permission was given to the school director and the objective of the study was told to him. The five mentors were chosen purposively and pleasant discussions were made between the researcher and participants. Then after, simple introductory questions were posed by the researcher. To get adequate answers for the interview, the researcher asked only one question at a time. The researcher listened to the participants' responses, observed their non-verbal signs such as gestures, facial expressions and body movements. The researcher has become neutral from suggesting insights to the interview questions. The researcher did not show signs of wonder, surprise and other emotional expressions till the interview session ends. The maximum time taken to conduct the interview is one hour and the place of the interview session was conducive. Tape recorder was used to record the responses given by participants. Tape recorder has enabled the

researcher to give full attention to what respondents say and to save much time. It has also helped the researcher to avoid irrelevant information which was recorded during the interview process. Finally, the recorded data was transcribed into English language.

### **Conducting the Focused Group Discussion**

Conducive place was selected with the consent of participants. Then five discussants were made to participate in the discussion. The researcher appreciated participants for coming to the discussion session and the purpose of the discussion was told to them. Discussants were also informed that everything raised in the discussion would be kept confidential. Before starting the actual discussion, the facilitator or researcher used an ice breaker designed to engage participants in the discussion process. Then after, the researcher started the discussion by giving turns to each participant to deeply express their knowledge, experience and viewpoints about the topic of discussion. In the course of this, the researcher initiated some silent participants to talk more and control those who dominate the discussion. The facilitator asked participants non-threatening and relevant questions, probed them to clarify vagueness, and pauses to give them time to comprehend ideas. In this way the facilitator made discussants to exhaust their ideas concerning the topic of discussion.

### **Method of data analysis**

To analyze the data gathered through interview and focused group discussion, all the cassettes were carefully and exhaustively listened. Then the findings were grouped into interpretive themes. Eventually, they were analyzed and interpreted thematically and discussed through an in-depth explanation and interpretation

### **Ethical considerations**

Detailed discussions were made with the research participants before the data gathering started. In the discussion the following issues were dealt with them.

- The purpose of the study was told to all participants
- Respondents were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary and thus they have the right to withdraw from the study for any or no reason at any time
- With regard to disguising personal identity, research participants were asked whether they would be named or given pseudonyms and all of them agreed to have pseudonyms
- Participants were asked to know their consent for audio-taping during the interview and focused group discussion. Fortunately, all of them agreed to be audio-taped. Hence, the responses of all participants were audio-taped.
- Participants were guaranteed that the data obtained from them would be treated with confidentiality and the researcher told them that he would keep his promise

### **Results**

This part of the study depicts the major findings of the research. In doing so, the data collected from the in-depth interview and focused group discussion from the respondents were critically analyzed and interpreted under four interpretive themes. The interpretive themes were constructed in line with the



research questions posed in part one of this study. Subsequently, each theme was followed by descriptions and interpretations.

As the study participants explained, some of the factors hindering the implementation of mentoring were found to be carelessness, late coming and absenteeism of the mentees. When interviewed about their experience of mentoring, they responded that they have good experience and they perceived a mentor as an experienced teacher who imparts his/her knowledge and experience to his/her mentees. As respondents stressed, mentees, before coming to the practicum session, need to have strong motivation and interest to accept and exercise the help to be given and also, they need to act as a mentee who needs support in the area of his/her career.

Concerning stake holders, participants stressed that training should be given continuously to mentors. Moreover, they underscored that practicum should not be given to mentees in each semester of each year. Rather, it has to be given starting from second year to third year when students adapt the setting and become more experienced. This frequent provision as they said is too difficult to manage and bring about the required change on the part of mentees. As they underlined, the repeated provision of practicum in the form of prac 201 and 202, 301 and 302 has made the process of the teaching-learning practice more monotonous and tedious for both mentees and mentors. So, the duration has to be short in that it has to be given when mentees become third year students. Furthermore, participants recommended that the practicum evaluation criteria should be prepared in a way mentors can understand easily. If it is clear, precise and directly showing what is practically happening in the classroom situation, it would be easier for mentors to control mark inflation and differentiate the able mentees from the unable ones and give marks according to their performance. As one participant reported, stake holders such as teacher education colleges, the Amhara Education Bureau, Zone and Woreda education offices should give due attention at the outset of the of selecting trainees. After selection, the training given in the teacher education colleges should be designed in a way which can produce qualified persons who are to contribute their part for the development of the country. Quality training should be given to the trainees. To bring about quality there must be closer attachment between the college and the concerned bodies.

The point stressed by participants is that when mentees are sent to different schools, they have to come up with their advisors and their number should also be minimized for mentors to easily manage them. And also, before being sent to various schools, mentees should get enough awareness and understanding by college advisors. There should be closer contact between college advisors and school mentors. This is because this situation facilitates the mentoring process and makes it easier. At the outset of the practicum, the college teacher (advisor) should go to school along with his/her advisees and introduce them to their respective mentors. Besides, the college teacher (advisor) should give some orientation to the student-teachers about what they will do in the schools where they are assigned and how they continue the practicum process and also how they communicate with their mentors. Moreover, the orientation will reduce the confusion mentees may face with the practicum.

As one informant said, mentees assignment to different departments is not proportional. As she explained, some departments are highly over loaded than others. This implies that there is no

proportional assignment of mentees to different departments in the school where this study is being conducted.

Concerning the criteria of the practicum evaluation format, participants said that it is too broad, more general, ambiguous and unclear. It does not address the activities prevailing in the actual classroom.

With regard to time allocation, especially for practicum 201 and 202, participants complained that there is serious problem. This is because mentors do not have adequate time and opportunity to properly understand the evaluation criteria and give the required mark according to mentees' performance and capability. As a result of this, mentors are forced to simply evaluate their mentees in an inflated and undifferentiated manner. That is, the time allocated and the evaluation criteria do not go together and hence they have to be reconsidered.

The other cause for mark inflation is the absence of closer attachment between mentors and the colleges, practicum unit. As respondents reported in the interview, there is a loose contact between the colleges' practicum unit and the school mentors. This has made mentors to use loose and irresponsible evaluation system. Furthermore, the lack of frequent trainings and workshops with regard to mentoring are also reported to have contributed more for mark inflation and undifferentiated evaluation. As it was raised in the focused group discussion, most mentors evaluate their mentees in common sense resulting in mark inflation and undifferentiated grading.

As it was repeatedly explained by participants, the other important variable contributing to mark inflation is the presence of discouraging incentives. The money to be paid to mentors for what they served in the mentoring activities is too small. Besides, the payment is not similar throughout departments. It differs from department to department. For instance, the minimum amount of money to be paid for language department is from 15-40 birr but the minimum amount to be paid for natural science department is 200 birr. So, this is another challenge causing mark inflation and exaggeration.

Besides, there is a big difference of payment between mentors and school principals. For example, for one mentor the minimum payment is not more than 200 birr but the minimum payment for one principal is 900 birr resulting in complains among mentors and in turn leading them to carelessness and irresponsible performances.

## **Discussion**

### **Mentors' Reasons for Giving exaggerated Marks**

In the findings, participants have reported that there are a number of factors associated with giving exaggerated marks to mentees. Of these factors, lack of training for mentors, assignment of large number of mentees to one mentor, use of deficient evaluation criteria, lack of closer communication between college and school teachers, loose linkage between college practicum unit and school practicum committee, lack of encouraging incentives to mentors, some mentors' uncaring and irresponsible behavior and lack of orientation to mentees before beginning their practicum were underlined to be the major problems for mark-exaggeration. This finding coincides with a study conducted by Dereje (2009) which states that, mentors, college teachers and mentees do not have

adequate knowledge and awareness about the implementation of practicum. As was described in this study, college teachers' knowledge of practicum seems to be confined only to the meaning and concept of it. His study implies that the knowledge of college teachers about the implementation of practicum is insufficient. The same holds true to mentors and mentees. From this idea, it can be implied that frequent training of practicum must be given to the three parties (college teachers, school teachers and student-teachers)

### **Reasons for Indiscriminate marking of Mentees**

As it was repeatedly explained in the findings, lack of training to mentors on how they critically evaluate and discriminate student-teachers was emphasized to be the fundamental factor affecting the mentoring process.

Mentors have been implementing their practicum evaluation on the basis of common sense and this tradition is believed to have paved the way for indiscriminate marking. The implication is that continuous training must be offered to mentors to develop their holistic understanding about mentoring. This finding goes with Dereje's (2009) study which points out that mentors do not have clear and sufficient understanding on the purpose of practicum. This finding is further supported by a study conducted by the faculty of educational and behavioral sciences of Bahirdar University (2011) which confirms that mentors evaluate their mentees on common sense basis. In this study it was found out that mentors did not know that there is an assessment guideline developed together with the practicum material. Similarly, the results of the focused group discussion indicated that there is training deficiency with respect to mentoring.

Furthermore, some mentors uncaring and irresponsible behavior is stressed to be one factor for indiscriminate marking of student-teachers. As was reported by participants, irresponsible mentors are the kind of teachers who leave everything to mentees and run their own private business. These teachers do not want to critically evaluate and follow up their mentees. So, at the end of the practicum work these irresponsible mentors give indiscriminate marks or equal to all mentees. This is because this procedure would make them free from complaints that come from the mentees side. The above finding is supported by Dereje's 2009 study which explains that some teachers/mentors leave the class to their mentees and perform their private work. In this study lack of continuous follow up and feedback is also emphasized to be the cause for indiscriminate marking. This finding is supported by the result from the focused group discussion. In the focused group discussion, lack of continuous follow up and feedback is raised to be a serious problem. However, this finding seems to contradict with the idea in the literature which demonstrates that a mentor should have a clear picture of his/her personal attitudes, values and ethical standards.

In the findings it was reported that assigning many student-teachers to one mentor would create work overload and this would make the mentor busy and commit mistakes (give indiscriminate marks). In line with this a study conducted by Bahirdar University, in 2009, has witnessed that assigning large number of student-teachers would create work overload on cooperating teachers (mentors). This implies that the condition has to be reconsidered. Similarly, it was underlined in the findings that the

evaluation criteria, especially, for prac 201 and 202 and the time allocated to practice it do not go together. The evaluation criteria were found to lack clarity, specificity, and practicality and the time allocated is too short to do so. This implies that mentors do not have ample time to critically visualize and understand the criteria and thus tend to give indiscriminate marks.

In the findings, it was disclosed that mentors' humanistic thinking (conformist behavior) has some contribution for indiscriminate marking and this condition was believed to occur upon mentors mentoring third year students. As respondents said, the longtime relationship between the mentor and the mentee changes the atmosphere (the mentor fails to do the real thing) and tends to be the victim of conformity leading to mistaken deed. The last factor emphasized in the findings is mentors' fear of mentees' complaints.

As study participants suggested in the interview, some mentors believe that discriminating students according to their performance would create complaints on the part of mentees. The same conclusion was reached during the focused group discussion. That is, in the focused group discussion, conformist behavior was believed and accepted to be a common tradition of primary school teachers in their mentoring activity.

### **Mentors' perception on teaching performance of mentees**

Participants perceived class room performance as an activity to be implemented in the classroom by student -teachers. Participants have reported that there are performance differences observed on the part of mentees. The differences were observed on academic competence, self-expression, teaching methods and class room management skills. It was also disclosed in the focused group discussion that there exist performance differences among student-teachers with respect to the above-mentioned areas. Moreover, the data obtained from the observation reveals that that there are differences between and among mentees with respect to their competence, teaching methods, and self-expression and class room management skills.

### **Solutions for Mentors' Exaggerated and indiscriminate marking**

As it was exhaustively explained in the findings, offering continuous training, workshops and orientations to mentors were found to be important remedies to minimize and gradually solve the problem. Thus, frequent training was found to be more important and thus, has to be adequately given by stake holders such as Amhara regional Education Bureau, General Education Quality Improvement program and the likes. Similarly, the money to be paid for mentors when compared with principals is deficient and discouraging. Therefore, providing encouraging incentive (money) was also emphasized to be the major solution to minimize the challenge. This is because it is believed to initiate mentors' work motivation. This finding coincides with a study undertaken by Dereje (2009) which says that stake holders working in the area of education do not seem clear about practicum and thus they have to get strong orientation. Participants have also disclosed that the college's practicum evaluation criteria should be specific, clear and practical in the sense that it has to be framed in the way which touches the practical class room performance of mentees on the ground. Similarly, the amount of time allocated for practicum 201 and 202 is very limited and scant. This would create problems for mentors not to critically evaluate and grade their mentees. As it was suggested in the finding, this situation would lead

mentors into haphazard marking system. This idea is supported by Dereje's study (2009) which confirms that there is scarcity of time with respect to practicum implementation.

It was also emphasized in the finding that the relationship between college teachers (advisors) and school teachers (mentors) is very loose. So, frequent contact and discussion related to mentees' performance was stressed to be made. Furthermore, informants pointed out that there is a loose linkage between the colleges' practicum unit and the schools' practicum committee and the gap was reported to be narrow. This implies that frequent discussions, supervisions and orientations should be made between the two parties. This finding coincides with Dereje's study which reveals that there is no strong college-school link with regard to practicum. In his study, Dereje has tried to reveal that strong college-school link is mandatory for the effective implementation of practicum.

Concerning mentees practicum participation, it was found out that some mentors were observed having conformist behavior in the sense that they simply give marks without being governed by their professional ethics. This type of behavior is believed to be avoided and mentors need to be governed by their professional ethics.

Generally, depending on the data obtained from the study participants and the literature reviewed, it can be said that giving exaggerated and indiscriminate marks to mentees has become a tradition on the part of mentors. The phenomenon is believed to have been associated with several factors of which the lack of training, lack of encouraging incentives, the shortage of time, the use of unclear evaluation criteria, availability of uncaring and irresponsible mentors and loose college-school link were underlined to be the principal ones. So, I feel that unless an early solution is sought, the problem may proceed being more complex and multi-faceted in its dimension and this may endanger the country's journey towards quality education. As it is known, education is believed to be an engine to bring about holistic development. So, unless its quality is maintained the millennium development goals that this country aspires to achieve will not be realized.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

In an attempt to understand mentors exaggerated and indiscriminate evaluation, a due consideration was made to investigate the main factors responsible for mark-exaggeration and indiscrimination. Subsequently, the lesson drawn from the investigation was treated under the following four interpretive themes. These themes include mentors' tradition of giving exaggerated marks, reasons for indiscriminate marking, perceptions on the classroom performance of mentees and solutions for exaggerated and indiscriminate marking. Thus, in this section a focus was made on the key findings of each theme and a summary of the responses to the research questions posed in part one of this study was also made.

It was found out in the finding that lack of frequent training, loose partnership between college and school teachers, assignment of large number of mentees to one mentor and to one school, discouraging incentives, loosened linkage between the college practicum unit and the schools' practicum committee, existence of irresponsible and lenient mentors, lack of specific, clear and practical criteria on the evaluation format, limited time duration.

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