

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: FROM COUNTING WOMEN TO ENSURING WOMEN COUNT: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY AND EARLY CAREER EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA FROM A CAPABILITIES PERSPECTIVE

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At the heart of this study is a concern with moving from counting women—from a quantitative focus on gender parity—to having women count—ensuring conditions exist that allow women teachers to fully participate in quality teaching and the positive transformation of the teaching profession. Women comprise less than 20% of secondary school teachers in Ethiopia (MoE, 2014), reflecting similar patterns of under-representation elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa. This study uses in-depth interviews and field observations over a period of 15 months in Addis Ababa to shed light on why many women in Ethiopia who enter university do not make it into secondary school teaching and why many of those who enter teaching, in urban areas where most teachers are concentrated, do not stay in the profession. Drawing on a capabilities perspective, the study goes further to examine the cumulative

disadvantage—in terms of well-being and agency—that women experience during the process of their university (undergraduate and teacher) training and in their early years of working in urban secondary schools, as well as the ways in which women contend with disadvantage.

This study shows that such disadvantage and the responses to it have implications not only for whether women enter and stay in teaching but also for how they engage in their work. Utilizing the rich qualitative data collected and the analysis afforded by using the capability approach, the study concludes by recommending how different actors, including government, universities and schools, can foster institutional conditions of possibility (Walker, 2006a) and educational arrangements that enhance rather than limit full and equal participation in the teaching profession. Foregrounded throughout this study are the voices and experiences of young women, offering a perspective which disrupts the presumed norm of the single male teacher and highlights some of the limits of gender-neutral teacher policies.

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EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN  
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by

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“To be a teacher is like being a candle. You give and give and give to others.  
. . . . But who is thinking about the teachers?”

- *Female secondary school teacher, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to the Baha'i youth in Iran who have been denied the right to higher education because of their belief in a Faith that upholds the oneness of humankind and the unequivocal equality of women and men.

And to my father-in-law, Abay Tsehaye, whose kindness was our constant companion in our first months in Addis Ababa and whose passing was one of the most difficult losses we will ever endure.

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## List of Abbreviations

AAU: Addis Ababa University

CoE&BS: College of Education and Behavioral Sciences

HE: Higher education

HEI: Higher education institution

MoE: Ministry of Education

PGDT: Post-Graduate Diploma in Teaching

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Background and Statement of Problem

For more than four decades, considerable attention has been directed toward countering gender inequality in education around the world. Girls' education, with a primary focus on access to basic education and more recently on retention and quality, has been the target of most of these efforts. Its prioritization as an international development goal is widely discussed and was specifically targeted in Education for All commitments and Millennium Development Goals; it remains central to the achievement of several of the Sustainable Development Goals. Very little attention, however, has been given in research or policy discussions to the experiences of adult women in school settings and to gender inequality in the teaching profession (Haugen et al., 2014; Molyneaux, 2011; Mulkeen, 2007).

Teaching is today a "feminized" profession in most parts of the world (Drudy, 2008; Griffiths, 2006; Kelleher, 2011). In several western countries it is the under-representation of male teachers, particularly at the primary school level, that has been the focus of discussion in recent years (Drudy, Martin, Woods & O'Flynn, 2005; OECD, 2005; Skelton & Francis, 2005). However, the other extreme exists in sub-Saharan Africa, where women are a minority in the teaching profession in more than half the countries in the region (UIS, 2014). Outside of sub-Saharan African and South Asia, the general trend is for the education of young children to be dominated by women. At the secondary level women teachers are often found in lower numbers, particularly in math and science subjects, but not to the extent as sub-Saharan Africa. In this region with one

of the highest demands for teachers in the world, the percentage of female teachers in secondary schools falls below 20% in more than one third of the countries and has decreased from a regional average of 33% in 1990 to stagnate at just below 30% for the past fifteen years (UIS, 2014).

In Ethiopia, 37% of all primary school teachers and 16% of secondary school teachers are women (MoE, 2014). For over a decade, the Ethiopian government has sought to increase the number of women admitted to post-secondary educational institutions, including teacher education programs (MoE, 2011a; Semela, 2007). In the case of secondary teachers, this has been pursued through affirmative action policies—lowering admissions requirements to undergraduate programs at national universities and instituting a quota for post-graduate teacher education. “Gender offices” and short-term assertiveness training programs have also been instituted in some universities (Molla, 2013; Narrowe, 2010). Reports indicate, however, that women drop out within the first two years of university study at higher rates than men, before even enrolling in a teacher education program (Melese & Fenta, 2009; Semela, 2007). Others leave during teaching training and in the transition to their first teaching post or shortly thereafter. Moreover, the formative experiences of women in becoming secondary school teachers can be expected to have long-term impact on teacher identity, retention and career advancement (Akyeampong & Stephens, 2002; Fischman, 2000; Hedges, 2002) but the constellation of constraints limiting women’s participation in the profession across these stages have not been examined.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 2 for further elucidation of the concept of “participation” (drawing on Fraser, 2007) as used in this study.



Training and early career experiences of teachers largely occur within the context, or in close interaction with, key education institutions (universities, schools and the MoE), the policies and practices of which have direct bearing on teachers' lives. Given the centralized nature in Ethiopia of secondary education, as well as teacher training for this level, the prospects for systematically studying these experiences and the possibility of having widespread impact on more gender equitable practices and policies are heightened.

### **Purpose and Central Research Questions**

In this qualitative dissertation I examine the process of becoming and working as a secondary school teacher in urban Ethiopia from the perspectives of women. In so doing, I aim to advance understanding of 1) the factors that limit women's equal and full participation in the teaching profession and 2) the way these constraining factors are perceived and responded to by women; so as to be able to 3) identify promising areas of intervention that can support full and equitable inclusion of women in secondary school teaching, beyond access to university and teacher education. To this end, this study will address the following two broad research questions:

- 1) How are women constrained in becoming and working as secondary school teachers in urban Ethiopia?
- 2) In what ways do women exercise agency in relation to these constraints?

While much of the literature on women teachers in sub-Saharan Africa focuses on rural areas (see Chapter 2), suggesting by implication that urban areas are unproblematic

for women, this study focuses on Addis Ababa, the largest urban center in Ethiopia, where there is a relatively high geographic concentration of women teachers but where women remain under-represented at the secondary school level (comprising 16.5% of secondary school teachers in the city (MoE, 2014) and where they continue to face many systemic constraints on their well-being and agency.

### **Significance and Contributions**

The full inclusion of women in the teaching profession is of significance in the context of Ethiopia, as it is in many sub-Saharan African countries, for multiple reasons. As the social demand for schooling increases, particularly at the secondary level, there is a pressing need for qualified teachers (Mulkeen, 2007). The recruitment, proper training and retention of a growing pool of qualified female candidates is necessary. However, beyond limited measures to increase access to teacher education programs, teacher policies have assumed the experiences of women and men to be alike. This study will examine to what extent this is the case and the effect of “gender-neutral” policies and practices.

At the same time, the crucial role of women teachers in promoting and supporting the education of girls is well-documented in the literature (Haugen et al., 2014). Particularly in areas where there are persistent obstacles to girls’ participation in school, women teachers have been shown to act as effective mentors, role models, advocates and allies to female students and their families (Anderson-Levitt, Bloch & Soumaré, 2002; Bernard, 2002; Casely-Hayford, 2008; Haugen et al., 2014; Huisman & Smits, 2009; Kwesiga, 2002; Lewis & Lockheed, 2006; Lloyd, Mensch & Clark, 2000; Lloyd, Tawila, Clark & Mensch, 2003; Nsubuga, 2006; UIS, 2010). The under-representation,

inadequate training, unequal status and limited career advancements of women teachers in many secondary schools, however, undermines efforts to provide quality education for girls, as well as boys (Buckler, 2012, 2015; Molyneaux, 2011; Warwick & Jatoi, 1994; Tao, 2013, 2014). It also has negative bearing on the shaping of school culture, the messages students receive about gender, and the expectations of girls for future careers (Dunne, 2007; Molyneaux, 2011).

Given the historical precedent in other parts of the world toward the feminization of teaching (Apple, 1996; Drudy, 2008; Griffiths, 2006), it is also important to understand how and on what terms women are being included in the profession in this context. What are the implications for women of entering an occupation that is generally considered low status, low paying and a stepping stone to something better, as it often is in Ethiopia and other sub-Saharan African countries?<sup>2</sup> What are the constraints on their occupational mobility and ability to supplement their income as is the practice of many male teachers? How are they viewed within the profession and by society? What are the aspirations and strategies of these women in the face of constrained circumstances? In what ways are women teachers exercising agency and how might their enhanced participation affect the profession and practice of teaching? Is it to be assumed that similar patterns of increasing feminization partnered with further decline in status will emerge as found elsewhere in the world (Apple, 1996, Drudy, 2008) and are alternatives possible? Such questions are not easy to answer (generally they are not even asked) but they call for a better understanding of the realities and everyday experiences of women

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<sup>2</sup> While the World Bank and other donor agencies are wont to argue that teachers earn several times the average per capita income in many African countries, they fail to acknowledge the low base against which this is measured and that the majority of people in these countries view teaching as low paying, and often of low status, relative to the training and investment required. When the rising costs of urban living are considered, teacher salaries fall further short of meeting basic expenses (see Chapter 8).

teachers, which have been largely ignored in the literature. Moreover, the entry of women into the teaching profession in Ethiopia, while still in small numbers, is occurring at a time of considerable flux and ongoing policy reform in the education system and the country as a whole (Tessema, 2006). Ethiopia has experienced rapid economic growth in recent years at the same time as deepening inequality (VSO, 2009), particularly in urban areas (Ali, 2011). The differential effects of these changes on young, educated women and men entering the teaching workforce and the mechanisms underpinning gender inequality have not been researched.

While this study has implications for advancing equality for women *in* formal education systems, it also speaks to the problem of advancing equality *through* education (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2005; Arnot & Fennell, 2008; Manion, 2011). Policy interventions have focused primarily on reducing gender disparity in enrollment and participation rates without careful consideration of the outcomes of schooling with respect to gender equality and the reproduction of unequal gender relations (Stromquist, 2006). As graduates of the formal education system, women teachers are in some sense the “products” of it, expected to evince the purported outcomes of schooling. By examining their lives we gain insight into the success with which gender equality is advanced through schooling, particularly with respect to women’s occupational participation, and the limitations of certain notions that have come to be taken-for-granted in development and education discourse.<sup>3</sup> Kamau (2010) notes the tendency in existing research to assume that African women professionals “have made it and, therefore, experience or pose no problems” (p. 121). This study seeks to address the

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<sup>3</sup> Several studies, for example, have troubled the notion of “education-as-panacea” and developmentalist assumptions about the transformation of girl students into “modern” empowered women (Stambach, 2000; Vavrus, 2003).

disconnect Kamau and others have noted between the considerable personal, family and public resources put into educating these women and the lack of interest in the outcome of these investments and the lived experiences of these women.

This study also aims to address in some measure the imbalance between the numerous detailed studies of women's educational and work experiences in other parts of the world and the paucity of nuanced studies in African countries. Written off as somehow stuck in history, culturally deficient, irrelevant, or too burdened by more pressing issues, African societies are not often enough the context for studies of ordinary (i.e., not starving, diseased, traumatized or mutilated) people working ordinary professions. The experiences of such women and men are also rarely the resource for the development of ideas and theories, feminist or otherwise (Oyěwùmí, 2010). It is my hope that this study may serve as a corrective, however small, to that nullification.

### **Drawing on the Capability Approach**

This study draws on what is commonly referred to as the capability (or capabilities) approach as pioneered by Amartya Sen, as well as Martha Nussbaum and other scholars who have further interpreted and developed its key concepts over more than two decades. The relevance and utility of the capability approach to this dissertation became apparent toward the end of field work as I engaged more deeply with the data collected and endeavored to make sense of emergent themes. As such, the core concepts of the capability approach (see Chapter 3) are prominent in the analysis of the data in this dissertation and the conclusions drawn but did not shape the specific questions asked during interviews or guide field observations, which were undertaken with a theoretically-open and ethnographic orientation (see Chapter 5). This late-adoption of the

capability approach in research is not uncommon, with studies drawing on the approach often using pre-existing data (Robeyns, 2006).

Specifically, the capability approach has strengths in addressing the following aspects that my field research revealed and confirmed to be of importance to this study:

- The capability approach provides a helpful frame of reference for thinking about increasing women's participation in teaching in conjunction with improving the well-being of women teachers. This emerges as crucial because the two are linked with respect to women's participation in the profession, particularly in a context where only a small minority of qualified candidates want to be teachers as is the case in Ethiopia. From a capabilities perspective, it is argued that gender justice demands going beyond seeing women teachers as a means to policy ends, such as advancing girls' education, to considering their well-being as an end in itself.
- Given that the views and values of (mostly male) policy-makers are often privileged in the creation of policies concerning teachers, the capability approach allows for focused consideration of the values and experiences of women teachers themselves.
- Building on this, the capability approach foregrounds human diversity and differences in experience and allows for highlighting the pitfalls of gender-neutral policies and equality measured only in terms of access (e.g., to university or the teaching profession) or outcomes.
- The capability approach effectively brings together agency and structural constraint. It incorporates in its framework examination of the potentially powerful actions of agents as well as the multiple constraints on such action, attending closely to the particularities of context.

- The capability approach is helpful in taking us beyond a general discussion of resource inputs, such as teacher salaries (as important as that is), to highlight what those resources are valued for and ways to creatively enhance institutional conditions of support and teacher agency toward full participation in and betterment of teaching.
- From the perspective of education, a capabilities perspective is also useful because it aids in the identification of specific capabilities that programs should be aiming to enhance (as well as the factors that limit them) and that can serve as a guide for curricular, program and institutional development.

### **Overview of Research Design**

Drawing on ethnographic research methods, the research for this dissertation was conducted in Addis Ababa over 15 months in 2014-2015. The first phase of research (February to June 2014) focused on experiences of women during undergraduate study (3-year Bachelor degree program) and the one-year Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT) program. This involved in-depth interviews with women pre-service teachers in the AAU PGDT program, as well as with current AAU undergraduate students, faculty and MoE staff. Observational fieldwork on the AAU campus over four months as well as shadowing of PGDT students during practice teaching supplemented this data. The second phase of research (September 2014 to May 2015) was focused on experiences during early years of teaching and involved in-depth interviews with women teachers in secondary schools in Addis Ababa. Interviews with school directors, faculty advisors, MoE staff and shadowing of four of these teachers further enriched the data. The extended duration of this research also allowed for the collection of longitudinal data in

the case of four research participants who were interviewed as pre-service and then in-service teachers. In total, 47 individuals across different sites, primarily two AAU campuses and 14 schools around Addis Ababa,<sup>4</sup> were interviewed for this study, several of them more than once.

### **Scope of Study**

With respect to the scope of this study, there is a clear demarcation in terms of the phases of experience with which it is concerned. It begins with those who have already made it to university and are, in a sense, considered the “success stories” (many of them coming from rural and low-income households and being the first woman in their family to enter university).<sup>5</sup> This study is also limited at the other end in being concerned with experiences during the first years of teaching, emphasizing the first three years but including experiences of participants who have been teaching for up to seven years. There will likely be other constraints experienced as women stay longer in the profession, seek career advancement, age and face different dynamics in their personal lives. What this study reveals are the ways in which women are disadvantaged from the start, even before many of them are married and have children, and how this has immediate and long-term implications for their participation in teaching.

It should also be noted that in referring to gender inequality and gendered constraints in this study, I have narrowed my concern to the disadvantage experienced by women. There are clearly gendered constraints that also limit men from participating to their full potential in the profession of teaching (Fischman, 2000). To some extent my

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<sup>4</sup> Six of the fourteen schools were visited on one or more occasions.

<sup>5</sup> Clearly the obstacles that limit girls’ successful completion of secondary school and access to university remain pressing problems and are part of the story of under-representation, but with the focus on girls’ basic education it is the relatively better-researched part in the context of sub-Saharan Africa.



focus reflects the emphasis of existing policy efforts on addressing the under-representation of women. No doubt much more research will need to be done to examine how gender structures the lives of men and their exercise of agency in this context.

Finally, while some aspects of the situation in urban Ethiopian may well be similar to those in other parts of urban sub-Saharan Africa, the situation of countries in the region vary greatly and so this research is not presented as a case study to be generalized to the rest of the continent.

### **Organization of Study**

To make sense of the framing and analysis employed in this study, the next two chapters take the reader through a review of the literature to which it contributes (Chapter 2) and provide an introduction to the capability approach and its core concepts as used in the dissertation (Chapter 3). This is followed by chapters describing the Ethiopian context in which the experiences being examined emerge (Chapter 4), and the methodology and design used to conduct the research (Chapter 5). The second half of the dissertation presents and discusses the findings of the research in relation to the experiences of women during undergraduate university study (Chapter 6), post-graduate teacher training (Chapter 7) and early years of teaching (Chapters 8 and 9), ending with a discussion of the recommendations that emerge from this analysis, further areas for research and a summary of conclusions (Chapter 10).

## Chapter 2: Review of Literature on Women Teachers in Sub-Saharan African

The literature on teachers in general—male and female—in sub-Saharan is underdeveloped, particularly with respect to the secondary school level. The experiences of women teachers, moreover, tend to be hidden within quantitative studies drawing on broad samples of teachers from different geographical environments that are largely gender neutral.<sup>6</sup> The silences with respect to women teachers is compounded by the focus within the gender and education research on girls, particularly their access to schooling, to the neglect of the women who are working in the education system and who are, in a certain respect, the “products” of the system.<sup>7</sup>

To some extent, such lacuna in the literature have begun to be addressed in recent years through more nuanced qualitative studies on women teachers in a few African countries. Common themes and some of the gaps in this emergent body of literature are reviewed here. Particular attention is then given to studies employing a capability approach (which will be explained more fully in the next chapter), highlighting contributions on which this dissertation builds. Also brought into view here is the rich and growing literature on women in higher education in sub-Saharan Africa. Because this dissertation includes the experiences of women in university—as undergraduates and

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<sup>6</sup> A case in point is the study by Mulkeen et al. (2007), involving interviews with 114 secondary school teachers and other educational actors in six African countries in which work conditions, teaching experiences and reasons for leaving the profession were examined. As one of few studies on secondary school teachers this is an oft-cited report but offers no gender analysis of the vast amount of data collected. This despite the authors noting in their introductory review that there is cause to believe that the experiences of women and men in teaching differ.

<sup>7</sup> Molyneaux (2011) also notes how the primary focus on girls’ access to education obscures the ways in which schooling acts to reproduce gender inequality. In addition to bringing women teachers into the analysis, Molyneaux calls for a shift in attention “from girls sitting in classrooms to the gender structures in which they learn, the gendered messages they receive in the classrooms, and their expectations for future careers given their teachers’ experiences” (p.64).

teacher trainees—it prompts a broader reading of the literature on women’s experiences within educational institutions, challenging the dichotomy of seeing them either as students or as teachers and bringing to light the continuities in disadvantage. In this connection, recent contributions from research using a capabilities perspective to examine issues of social justice in higher education are also discussed.

### **Women in the Teaching Profession: Themes and Gaps**

#### **Gender Equality and Women’s Participation in Teaching**

The limited supply of qualified female candidates into teaching is commonly considered one of the most significant factors affecting the under-representation of women teachers in many African countries. The analysis is generally that the same barriers limiting girls’ enrollment and retention in schools, particularly in rural areas, also affect the supply of women teachers (Hertz & Sperling, 2004; UIS, 2010). While certainly a factor, particularly in rural areas, this pipeline argument merits closer examination in urban areas in countries like Ethiopia where girls are completing secondary school in growing numbers (see Chapter 4) and the unemployment rate among university graduates is high. Despite limited options for alternative employment (Mains, 2012), relative job security and quotas to ensure women’s access to teaching in Ethiopia, the quotas are often not filled. In Ethiopia, as in many other African countries, there are evidently other factors affecting women’s entry into teaching besides the limited number of qualified candidates.

Who becomes a teacher and why has, moreover, received inadequate attention in the existing literature. Some of the research suggests that the status of teaching as a “poor

person's" profession or career of last resort (Coultas & Lewin, 2002; Daun, 1997; Hedges, 2002; Towse, Kent, Osaki & Kirua, 2002) leads those who are qualified to opt for other fields, further limiting the supply of prospective female teachers (Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010). Some with low secondary school grades enter teacher training programs because it is their only option for pursuing higher education but then look for work in other fields upon graduation, if they are able to graduate (Eshete, 2003; Hedges, 2002). The factors contributing to low enrollment and performance of girls in science and math subjects at the secondary school level limit their specialization in these areas, and consequently the marketability of their skills and career options as teachers (Molyneaux, 2011). In addition, constraints brought on by marriage, child-rearing and prioritization of the husband's education and professional development may limit pursuit of the necessary training to become a teacher (Stromquist et al., 2012; VSO 2013, 2014). Inadequate childcare can bar entry to the workforce entirely or for extended periods, creating difficulty in finding work or work of comparable pay later (Arends & Phurutse, 2009; Stromquist, et al., 2012; VSO 2013, 2014).

Women who enter the teaching profession face a number of constraints documented in the literature (see Haugen et al., 2014 for a comprehensive review).<sup>8</sup> Many of these constraints lie in the intersection of teachers' personal and professional lives as a consequence of the sexual division of labor in the household. Because women generally carry out the bulk of the work involved in the management and maintenance of the home, provision of food, and the care of children and elderly, they are much more constrained in terms of flexibility and the time and energy available for other tasks.

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<sup>8</sup> Popular knowledge of these constraints may be acting to further limit entry of women into an occupation that is already poorly perceived (Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010; Stromquist et al., 2012), although the extent to which this is the case is not evident from the literature.

Ethnographies of teachers' lives in African countries (Buckler, 2012; Dunne, 2007, Molyneaux, 2011; Osler, 1997; Tao, 2013) echo those conducted elsewhere (e.g., Kirk, 2004a, 2006), in revealing that women and men have different demands on their time and also experience teaching differently.

In one of very few ethnographic studies of secondary school teachers' lives in Africa, Molyneaux's research (2011) in a secondary school in Uganda reveals institutional regulations and cultural expectations that account for the production and perpetuation of gender inequalities. In the context of a program promoting universal secondary schooling, which resulted in reduced school budgets and wages, men were found more likely than women to take on moonlighting jobs in other schools, and spent less time in the school of their primary employment. Such practice was condoned by the school, with women teachers taking on additional teaching duties without remuneration. The very possibilities for engaging in supplemental employment were strongly differentiated by gender. The disproportionately male science teachers had more marketable skills and limited domestic responsibilities. Women teachers engaged in income-generating activities that could be carried out close to the home (e.g., urban farming), which did little to advance their teaching careers and encouraged some to consider leaving the occupation all together. Through a focus on teachers' lives, Molyneaux examines "what it means to be an empowered woman in the Ugandan workforce, and what messages girls receive from equity policies aimed at increasing their future potential" (p. 76). Among other insights, her study reveals the limitations of a focus on individual empowerment and of conflating schooling with empowerment. She suggests that the development of collective abilities to effect change at the household,

community, and institutional level (Rowlands, 1995) also need to be brought into the discussion.

Adding to this complexity of experience is the way in which African women professionals must navigate local gender role expectations and hegemonic masculine norms in the workplace (Kamau, 2010). Studies in South Africa (Diko, 2007) and Liberia (Shriberg, 2007) report the undermining of female teachers' and administrators' authority and how their voices are often not heard in decision-making processes. Women may be overlooked for promotion due to family responsibilities, be unable to take on additional roles that would lead to such promotion, or be perceived in negative ways such as 'lazy' or uninterested (Dunne, 2007; VSO 2013, 2014). Women often have few role-models and male supervisors may lack knowledge of the particular constraints women face (Casely, Hayford, 2008). The sexual harassment and objectification of women teachers is also common in many African schools (Dunne, Humphreys & Leach, 2006; Shriberg, 2007, 2008). On the flip side, identification of female teachers as "surrogate mothers" has resulted in some places in their being assigned to lower primary grades, often with the largest class sizes (Bennell, 2004; Shriberg, 2007). A discourse of women as more caring and nurturing, and, therefore, better suited for primary (and pre-primary) teaching, is common throughout the world (Fischman, 2000). Feminist scholars have argued that in this context teachers' actual characteristics are substituted with stereotypical features associated with the domestic sphere, mothering and emphasized forms of femininity (Carvalho, 1996; Connell, 1995; Fischman, 2000; Stacki, 2008; Stromquist, 1996).

The few studies that exist in the African context suggest that more research into the gendered aspects of teaching is needed, including how women experience and are

constrained in the profession and how this affects their participation (see Buckler, 2012, 2014). Such questions are not tangential but central to efforts to improve education quality and equity for all students, as well as advancing gender equality in the teaching profession. Much of the existing literature, moreover, has tended to focus on the experiences of women teaching at the primary school level—where women are represented in largest numbers—and on rural areas where women often face harsh challenges. The urban is usually framed in contrast to the rural as the preferred destination for women teachers and, in being left unexamined, is assumed to be unproblematic for women. This generally feeds into a modernist presumption that increased formal schooling and urbanization will automatically lead to greater gender equality (Stambach, 2000; Vavrus, 2003). This dissertation highlights ways in which this is not automatic and how women teachers in urban schools (which in Ethiopia are by far the majority of secondary schools—see Chapter 4) continue to face persistent gendered constraints. These constraints are compounded, moreover, by the particular dynamics of urban schools characterized by growing economic inequality and social problems, as will be discussed in later chapters.

### **Early Teaching Experiences**

Of particular relevance to this dissertation are the experiences of teachers during their early years of teachings. This study takes seriously the process of becoming a teacher and the incremental ways in which disadvantage for women is created. As will be addressed later in this chapter, experiences in higher education are critical but the transition from teacher trainee to practicing teacher is also fraught with difficulties and is often dramatic (Arends & Phurutse, 2009). Referencing teacher research in the United

States and internationally, Alsup (2006) notes that “the first years of teaching are even more difficult than remaining in the profession as an experienced teacher” (2006, p. 21). During this time, expectations of trainees meet the often-times harsh realities of teaching. While discrepancies between university education and real-life experience has been noted to be a common challenge for new teachers throughout the world (Alsup, 2006), the literature indicates that teacher practice and classroom experience may be much more limited in teaching training programs in African countries than it is elsewhere (Akyeampong & Stephens, 2002). Featuring prominently in these studies is the complaint by newly-qualified teachers that their training was overly-theoretical (Arends & Phurutse, 2009; Avalos & Aylwin, 2007; Casely-Hayford, 2008), as well as complaints about classroom management and the lack of adequate supervision (Hedges, 2002; Westbrook et al., 2009). The first teaching post also brings first exposure to the often constrained living conditions of teachers, including problems with housing, the educational bureaucracy, hostility from the community, and lack of respect from school administrators (Arends & Phurutse, 2009; Casely-Hayford, 2008; Hedges, 2002; Mulkeen, 2008). Little, however, is known about whether and how women experience these challenges, the unique challenges they face, and how they respond to such constraints.

Other studies (Braun, 2011; Dunne, 2007; Miyajima, 2008) refer to contradictions and tensions between the occupational socialization experienced in teacher training programs and the gender-regimes of particular school environments, which newly-qualified teachers are often forced to navigate on their own. So while student-teachers may have been trained and expect to be able to act in particular ways, they quickly learn



the limitations of what is possible in their first job, and that these possibilities are more limited for them than their male counterparts. Women also quickly learn that the way they act, speak, dress and so forth is scrutinized in ways very different to those of male teachers (Braun, 2011; Casely-Hayford, 2008). Research examining these dynamics in African contexts is as yet very limited.

### **Teaching and its Feminization**

The feminization of the teaching profession simultaneous to its reduction in status and pay is another prominent theme in the broader literature on gender and teaching across the world (Acker, 1994; Apple, 1986; Drudy et al., 2005; Kelleher, 2011).

Whether or not similar patterns will unfold in sub-Saharan African countries where women teachers are currently a minority in most places is a complex question given the considerable diversity in terms of socio-cultural norms, institutional development, historical experiences and shifting political terrain. The latter aspects are important in terms of understanding changes over time, the particular configuration of factors at play, and the implications of those changes for women and for the gendering of the profession (Drudy, 2008; Fischman, 2000; Kelleher, 2011). However, while the low status and poor conditions of teaching in sub-Saharan Africa are widely acknowledged in the empirical and analytical literature (e.g., Mulkeen, 2008; Obanya, 2010; VSO, 2009), the intersection of this decline in the profession with efforts to increase the participation of women in it have not been adequately examined. They are, however, central to this study.

In a global and national context where teachers are viewed as both the problem and the solution to the provision of quality education (Buckler 2012, 2015; Connell, 2009; MoE, 2009), the factors constraining women's full participation in teaching matter.

What does it mean for women to work in a profession that is low pay, low status and male dominated? In this regard, the capability approach pushes us to ask what women teachers themselves value personally and professionally, and in what ways their opportunities and agency to pursue and achieve these aims, as well as officially-valued goals, are constrained or enhanced.

### **Women Teachers and the Capability Approach**

Until recently, the application of the capability approach to education in the research literature focused almost solely on the experiences of students and learners in formal and nonformal educational settings.<sup>9</sup> The research of two scholars, Elizabeth Tao (2013, 2014) and Alison Buckler (2012, 2014, 2015), however, has advanced contributions in this area with respect to the lives of women teachers (see also Cin & Walker, 2013). Their work is briefly reviewed here and frequently referenced in this dissertation which builds on some of the conceptual applications of the capability approach they have introduced.

In her dissertation, “Rethinking Teacher Quality” (2013), Tao combines the capability approach with critical realism to present causal explanations for why teachers in Tanzania act and behave the way that they do. She aims to reconcile depictions of poor working and living conditions of teachers with commonly criticized behaviors, such as absenteeism and the use of corporal punishment, that often bolster policy arguments about poor teacher quality. Her main argument is that teachers’ criticized actions are often the result of constrained capabilities (2013, p. iii), capabilities being a person’s real opportunities to be and to do the things she has reason to value (Sen, 1987—see next

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<sup>9</sup> The next chapter provides a fuller explanation of the capability approach and its core concepts.

chapter). Tao notes that within the capability literature there is recognition of the role that teachers have to play with regard to the expansion of their students' capabilities but less has been said about the issue of teachers' own capability deprivation. "There is a need to place a concerted effort on investigating teacher capability expansion," Tao observes, "not only because this has significant implications towards improving student capabilities, but also because Tanzanian teachers can also be viewed as a group that suffers from capability deprivation" (2013, p. 59). This holds true for the Ethiopian context as well. Of particular relevance to this study is Tao's prioritization of teachers' voice and her consideration from a capabilities perspective of teachers' individual notions of well-being, the factors that constrain this and teachers' responses to the circumstances they face.<sup>10</sup>

Tao's dissertation is based on three ethnographic case studies of an urban, peri-urban and rural primary school in Arusha and Engido districts in Tanzania. Each case study incorporates data collected over five weeks in 2010 using qualitative methods. Teachers were the primary participants in the study but some of those working with and managing the teachers were also included.<sup>11</sup> From her findings, Tao identified the "beings and doings" (functionings) most valued by teachers, noting that the ones that ranked highest, which she terms "first-order functionings," were almost all related to the conditions of teachers' personal lives rather than their work conditions and practice. Many of these first-order personal functionings, moreover, were related to basic capabilities necessary for survival and instrumental for ensuring other capabilities. These

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<sup>10</sup> Of less concern in this study is Tao's effort to draw direct causal links between capability deprivation and patterns of behavior by using critical realism.

<sup>11</sup> Tao's study was not specifically focused on women teachers but they are the majority of teachers at the primary level in Tanzania and comprised 80 of the total 96 research participants.

included: being healthy; being able to live in a satisfactory home; being able to take care of family; being able to earn extra income and being respected, among others.

Tao notes how the primary constraint teachers face is related to inadequate income but goes on to explore what that income is needed for, the kinds of actions teachers take to pursue such valued functionings, and the implications for their practice as teachers. For example, she describes how in contending with the constraints on living in a satisfactory home, which is expensive and not provided by the government in Tanzania (although it has been promised), teachers are affected by a general state of anxiety and distraction, and absenteeism is more likely due to engagement in outside income-generating activities.

While not the central focus of the study, Tao dedicates a chapter to examining how gender influences what teachers value, how they articulate such values and the differing constraints they face in achieving them. So, for example, she describes how the functioning of “being able to take care of family” was valued mostly by women teachers but also notes the strong influence of cultural norms and the difficulty of distinguishing between what women want to do and what they have to do and thus express as an “adaptive preference” (pp. 120-123—see next chapter for explanation). Tao also observes how women tended to articulate their values in terms of a “deficit perspective,” that is, in terms of what they lacked in their lives and would likely face obstacles in achieving into the future, whereas men were more likely to express what they valued from an “aspirational perspective,” with the hope and plans to achieve prioritized functionings in time (pp. 123-126). Moreover, Tao describes gendered constraints that prevent women from pursuing personal and professional goals, such as women’s extra shift of domestic

duties that limit their time and energy and prevent them from upgrading their qualifications. She also notes and provides various examples of how such constraints are ignored in gender-neutral policies which let education officials “off the hook” when it comes to acknowledging and addressing gender as a conversion factor (p. 128).<sup>12</sup>

For the most part, Tao’s focus is on the personal well-being freedom and achievement of teachers and its implications for their professional practice and behavior. Buckler (2012), on the other hand, focuses on professional functionings—“beings and doings” valued by teachers in relation to their work, as well as those valued by education officials and enshrined in government policy—and evaluates teachers’ agency freedom and achievement in relation to these work-sphere goals.

In her dissertation entitled “Understanding the Professional Lives of Female Teachers in Rural Sub-Saharan African Schools” (2012), Buckler draws on her shadowing of seven women teachers in rural community schools in five countries (Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa and Sudan), as well as analysis of government policy documents and interviews with education officials in these countries, to explore the relationship between official representations of teachers’ work and the professional lives teachers create and experience.<sup>13</sup> One of the contributions of this study is that it renders visible patterns of agency that teachers have within their professional lives. It also

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<sup>12</sup> In a 2014 article, Tao reports on a similar use of capability approach to examine the factors contributing to women teachers’ avoidance of and attrition from rural teaching in Kwara State in Nigeria. By analyzing multiple conversion factors simultaneously, particularly those of a social nature (such as gender dynamics, norms and identities) that limited the achievement of women teachers’ well-being, Tao was able to identify possible policy solutions grounded in the reality of teachers’ lives and what they valued, while also making apparent the inherent bias in existing “gender-neutral” policies. Here again, though, the focus is on primary school teachers and this time solely in rural areas.

<sup>13</sup> The data for the dissertation was collected in two stages, one over 2007-2008 when Buckler worked with the Teachers’ Lives project, and the second over 2009-2011 during her PhD studies, with several field visits to each of the five countries. In addition to shadowing the seven primary participants of the study, Buckler also conducted focus group discussions and questionnaires with small groups of teachers at the different schools (see Chapter 3, 2012), interviews with education officials and policy document analysis.

points to how the predominant deficit model of thinking about teachers' work in sub-Saharan Africa, as articulated in policy documents and research literature, fails to take account of the more complex ways in which female working lives are situated. In this respect, Buckler's research is focused on the intersection of professional values with gender and rurality.

As part of her analysis, Buckler develops two lists: one of officially valued capabilities and related functionings (across the countries) and the other a combined teacher-generated list of valued professional capabilities and functionings. Her comparison of these two lists reveal that the official functionings are more influenced by national and international priorities and a longer timeframe (e.g., "loyalty") while teachers' valued functionings tend to focus more on the small-scale and immediate needs of their classrooms and communities (e.g., "support and encouragement") (2012, p. 288) but that there is considerable overlap. Differences between the lists emerged in some cases from teachers not being aware of policies and what is officially valued. There were also instances in which officially valued capabilities were not considered relevant by teachers to their work in rural school and were, thus, not prioritized by them.

Buckler then goes further to examine the extent to which female teachers in rural schools are able to pursue and achieve valued aspects of teaching (see also Buckler, 2014 and 2015). In this regard, she found that there was considerable variation between teachers and that those with high levels of agency freedom to pursue functionings they valued also tended to have high levels of agency to pursue those on the official list, although none of the teachers had the full agency freedom to pursue all functionings. She also found that teachers were more likely to lack agency than they were to choose not to

act on that agency (i.e., in most areas of their work they were doing what they could) (p. 288). Teachers' values, agency and the choices they made with respect to the lists were, thus, very much interrelated. Buckler argues that "policies for teachers should be about eliminating or decreasing obstacles that prevent them from achieving professional capabilities that more equally represent ideas about teaching that both they, and the governments they work for, have reason to value" (2012, p. 330).

Buckler's dissertation also offers a number of broad observations related to gender. She notes how the personal aspects of teachers' lives are largely absent from the official literature on teachers and teaching, including lack of acknowledgement of the ways in which teachers' personal lives could impact positively on their work. She highlights in this context the value of capacities developed in the course of motherhood (e.g., in addressing the emotional needs of students in poor schools and fostering skills outside the curriculum) and how teachers in her study found what they learned through parenting to be more valuable than what they learned from professional development courses. She also notes the value of women teaching in their own communities, noting that teachers in her study who were from outside tended to prioritize their personal and professional development over the needs of the community (p. 290).<sup>14</sup> The study also draws attention to how a key aspect of teaching valued by women is the time it enables them to spend with their families and undertake domestic work. In this regard, teaching was the only viable employment opportunity for some of the women in her study.

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<sup>14</sup>At the same time she notes that women teaching in their own communities were often respected embodiments of local customs and norms and that the two teachers in this situation in her study demonstrated less agency to change the status quo with respect to gender norms such as early marriage or to motivate students to aspire to a life outside the village.

Although focused on women teachers, gender tends to become a secondary consideration in Bucker's study in which conditions of rural teaching and other factors within the profession and schools feature more prominently. In this study, I seek to give attention to both; to address the more general conditions of the profession in conjunction with the constraints posed by gender. In aiming to gain a deeper and more integrated understanding of women teachers' experiences, this dissertation explores how women view and navigate the general conditions constraining all teachers as trainees and workers in a low paying, low status profession, as well as the gendered dimensions that specifically affect women (highlighted in the first part of this review), and how the two intersect. I interweave the discussion of these different constraining factors to reflect more holistically the experience of women. Moreover, in its attentiveness to human diversity, the capability approach makes it possible to highlight differences within the category of "women." Additionally, this dissertation focuses on urban experiences and secondary school-level teaching which are not addressed in either Tao's or Buckler's research.

Furthermore, while Tao's dissertation focuses primarily on teacher well-being, in which personal functionings are prioritized, and Buckler addresses the agency freedom and achievement of teachers with respect to their professional practice, this dissertation brings both into view. In so doing, it highlights factors dissuading women from entering and staying in the teaching profession, factors affecting their occupational mobility, as well as factors affecting their well-being, agency freedom and engagement while working as secondary school teachers.



## **Women in University and Teacher Training**

Similar to how early teaching experiences are a formative stage in the professional development of teachers, experiences during teacher training also have long-term implications for occupational participation. For the most part, however, research tends to be conducted on teaching and pre-service teacher education separately. Stromquist et al. (2012) are among the few researchers that bring both stages into view and point to the gender inequalities that affect women during teacher training and into teaching. It is even less often that the rich and growing research on women in higher education in Africa (not just teacher education) is brought in to shed light on the experiences of women in becoming teachers and on how disadvantages emerge and are compounded across the stages of undergraduate study, teacher education and early teaching.<sup>15</sup>

### **Teacher Education Experiences**

The question of who becomes a teacher and the expectations and aspirations of those entering teacher training programs has been addressed in a few studies on student teachers in Africa (Akyeampong & Stephens, 2002; Coultas & Lewin, 2002; Arends & Phurutse 2009). As noted earlier, however, very little of this literature includes any kind of gender analysis. A case in point is the study by Akyeampong and Stephens (2002) in Ghana, which was part of the Multi-Site Teacher Education Research Project (MUSTER) coordinated from the University of Sussex Institute of Education. This exploration of the

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<sup>15</sup> The process of qualification to become a secondary school teacher varies across countries with respect to whether a Bachelor's degree in education is offered or some other form of certification is required and whether teachers study in general public universities or separate teacher education colleges, and there are often several paths for entry and upgrading. Nonetheless, qualifying as a secondary school teachers requires more years of higher education than primary teaching, and in the case of Ethiopia involves both undergraduate study in an unrelated field and HE training as a prospective teacher (see Chapter 4).

backgrounds and shaping of student teachers in Ghana involved a random sample of 100 new student teachers from four teacher training programs in the southern part of Ghana, 265 of whom were male and 135 female. Despite ample opportunity afforded by the research design to explore differences in the responses of male and female student teachers, the only mention of any gendered pattern in the article is a reference to the tendency for females to enter into teacher training at an earlier age than their male counterparts (for which no explanation is suggested). The article examines important dimensions of background experiences, expectations and aspirations (including why teaching was chosen as a career and aspirations and expectations after training), as well as teacher training experiences,<sup>16</sup> but with no further mention of gender. It is unclear whether differences in the responses of male and female student teachers did not exist (which seems unlikely given the subjects raised and detailed responses obtained), whether they were simply not examined or were for some reason not reported by the authors. The gendered dimensions of all these aspects clearly do need to be explored if we are to better understand the experiences of female student teachers and the particular constraints they face.

Researchers have, thus, called for the need for more detailed life histories of female trainees and teachers (Haugen et. al., 2014). Casely-Hayford (2007) argues for the need to study the characteristics of female teachers at the training college level to better prepare them for the realities of teaching and to incorporate such preparation into teacher training programs. More information about who the women are who enter teaching is also important in order to unpack the category of “women.” Feminist theory has gone to great

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<sup>16</sup> For example, interview responses revealed the authoritarian environment of teacher training colleges, some of which were formerly seminary colleges, and how efforts were made to instill discipline by regimenting every aspect of student teachers' lives.

lengths to demonstrate the intersectionality of different axes of inequality (e.g., race, ethnicity, class, rurality), recognizing that very rarely does gender inequality operate in isolation but may in fact act as “a medium for the articulation, reinforcement, and resignification of systems of classification” (Fischman, 2000, p. 5).

Research on student teachers and newly-qualified teachers is particularly insightful in being able to examine processes of occupational socialization and the shaping of teacher identity at its most formative and intense. More in-depth study of women’s experiences in teacher training programs will aid in understanding their backgrounds, aspirations and expectations, the challenges they face, and the nature and implications of gendered processes of occupational socialization. This contributes toward answering the question of why some women do not complete the process of becoming a teacher or even enter teaching. It also highlights inadequacies and contradictions in the training program that contribute to the unequal participation of women as teachers and the gendered experience of teaching.

### **Higher Education Experiences**

The literature on women in higher education in Africa raises issues that have critical bearing on women’s well-being and agency development in the process of becoming teachers, particularly secondary school teachers, as well as on their participation in the teaching profession. An influential article by Bennett (2002) offers critiques of the absence of gender analysis in HE curriculum development and policy research, and examination of women’s structural disadvantage stemming from their double professional/academic and domestic obligations (see also Mama, 2003). This literature brings to the fore how “institutional practice involves segregating academic

work from family networks, producing scholars and teachers without knowledge of the complex world of social reproductive labor, and ensuring the ‘masculinization’ of people within the academy” (Bennett, 2002, p. 11). These dynamics have bearing for female students in this environment, as well as parallels in the professional lives of teachers in a largely male dominated labor structure. Moreover, given the extremely low numbers of female faculty in many countries (see Eshete (2003) for education faculties in Ethiopia), female student-teachers have very few role models to observe, and can likely perceive these gendered dynamics at work in the lives of those they do come across.

Common difficulties reported in studies focusing on teachers are also found in the literature on women in higher education. These include the various obstacles for women to gain the necessary qualifications for entry into higher education (Kwesiga, 2002) and the challenges they face in the programs when academic backgrounds are weak. While efforts to increase the number of women in teacher training programs are made through affirmative action policies, these are not always accompanied by needed support for female students once they have been accepted (Eshete, 2003; Molla & Cuthbert, 2014—see also the capability literature reviewed below). In addition, the problems of inadequate housing and childcare provision on campuses prevail and disproportionately affect women (Pereira, 2007).

In a qualitative study drawing on in-depth interviews with 24 women academics, Kamau (2010) provides a nuanced picture of the experiences of women academics in Kenya as “outsiders within” who navigate both local gender role expectations and western hierarchies of gender subordination inherent in the academy. Her examination of how such women act to subvert, resist, adapt, and appropriate the hegemonic masculine

norms of their workplace for self-definition and personal empowerment suggest that such an examination may also be illuminating in considering the acts of resistance, and the constraints on such action, of female university students and secondary school teachers. It is worth noting that such disruptions in the reproduction of gender inequality are largely individual in character, the collective dimension of empowerment often remaining absent.

Sexual harassment and violence is another aspect prominent in the experiences of women in higher education that is emphasized in the literature focusing on Africa (Bennett, 2002; Kwesiga, 2004; Kamau, 2010; Mama 2003; Molla & Cuthbert, 2014; Morely, 2006, 2011; Pereira, 2007). Learning and carrying out responsibilities as student, lecturer or administrator under conditions of abuse and fear is rendered near impossible and gaining “access” to higher education becomes meaningless as a form of empowerment for women when sexual harassment and violence prevail (Bennett, 2002). Pereira (2007) describes the rise of “sexual corruption” in reference to the sexual transactions between female students and male faculty for grades, course entrance and examination questions—practices likely exacerbated by reduction in subsidies and increased student poverty (Morely, 2011). In many studies, instances are also reported in which women are the focus of harassment for refusing to engage in sexual relations with peers. While noting the lack of comprehensive research and incisive gender analysis, Mama (2003) makes the following observations about the prevailing sexual culture in African institutions of higher education: “There is enough anecdotal and qualitative evidence . . . to suggest that HEIs are significant institutional sites for the production and

reproduction of contemporary gender identities (masculinity and femininity) and sexual practices” (p. 117).<sup>17</sup>

Literature critically examining policy reforms that target the problem of gender inequality in HE (Fennell & Arnot, 2008; Mama & Barnes, 2007; Morely, 2006), point to a number of inadequacies in such reforms. In a sophisticated analysis of the framing of gender inequality in HE in the context of neoliberal education reform processes in Ethiopia, Molla (2013) points to four problems in key policy documents guiding action in this area: silences, superficial framing, mislocating the problem and problematic categories. With respect to the first, he notes that “equity policy provisions are silent on the structural aspects of the inequalities” (p. 201). They focus primarily on expanding access, which ignores forms of internal exclusion and disadvantage within HEIs, and leads to the promotion of limited remedial measures which focus “on the manifestations of the problem not on the causes” (p. 202). Related to this is the superficial framing of the problem as one solely of numerical under-representation in relation to which the policy objective is to “narrow the gender gap.” Such a framing demonstrates “a lack of conceptual clarity and depth in problematizing gender inequality” and perpetuates the limited focus on access and enrollments (p. 205). Again, the suggested equity instruments “lack responsiveness to qualitative aspects of the problem of gender inequality in the subsystem” (p. 206). Existing policies also mislocate the problem, employing a deficiency model of inequality that foregrounds personal characteristics of women, like lack of confidence and poor academic preparedness. Viewing women as the problem

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<sup>17</sup> Mama (2003) gives as example the widely held assumption that women will find their futures spouses on university campuses while marital “success” may be dependent on women not “over-qualifying themselves” academically and thereby making themselves “less attractive.” She also cites reported instances in which women have been the focus of harassment for refusing to engage in sexual relations with peers.

reinforces prejudicial views about their inferior status and lack of capacity. Finally, the unexamined categorization of all women as a ‘disadvantaged group’ presumes that there are no differences within this group, overlooking intersections of gendered disadvantage with class, ethnicity and rurality. As such, policies miss critical equity targets and fail to create tailored support sensitive to the varying degrees of inequality experienced by women in HEIs (ibid.). The inadequacies of such policies are central to the disadvantage experienced by women that is addressed in this dissertation.

### **Higher Education and the Capability Approach**

While many of the applications of the capability approach to education more generally (see next chapter) also apply to the higher education context, a few scholars have focused specifically on capability analyses of this sub-system. In particular, the work of Walker (2006a, 2006b, 2007) and Wilson-Strydom (2012) in the UK and South Africa inform the analysis of findings in Chapter 6 of this dissertation, which is concerned with the capability of women to participate, beyond formal access, in university. As Walker notes, because the capability approach is concerned with the lives that people actually manage to live, it provides both a conceptual lens for theoretically exploring university participation from a social justice perspective, as well as a basis for proposing interventions that draw on the actual experiences of students (Walker, 2006b, p. 142; Wilson-Strydom, 2012, p. 100).

In the context of debates around access and successful transition to university in South Africa, Wilson-Strydom (2012) suggests that “we might consider the current implications of increasing access, without increasing chances of success, to be a ‘new’ form of injustice in higher education” (p. 45). She acknowledges the policy tendency to

focus on outcomes such as numbers or proportions of historically and socially disadvantaged students accepted to university and the provision of resources such as dorms and financial aid. However, drawing on the capability approach, she argues that:

Seldom is sufficient attention given to students' capabilities, their opportunity freedoms or their freedoms to make effective use of the opportunity of university study. While personal conversion factors such as academic preparation tend to be considered in making admissions decisions, less often are the social and environmental conversion factors really understood and actively tackled by universities. . . .[A]ccess currently does not lead to success or well-being of students, but perhaps instead to new forms of injustices such as young people dropping out of university with accumulated debt, self-doubt and no qualification.” (Wilson-Strydom, 2012, pp.147-148)

Walker's work draws on the capability approach to evaluate social and pedagogical arrangements that influence possibilities for equality in learning opportunity in various educational settings. In the context of HE in the UK, she poses the question, “how do we evaluate equality achievements in relation to widening participation?” (Walker, 2006a, p. 90). In seeking to answer this question, she worked with 14 students who were part of a Widening Participation project to examine their individual experiences as they engaged in HE studies. Walker concludes in this study that a capabilities perspective calls for an expanded understanding of what “widening participation” means, one that requires recognizing:

. . . the ways in which higher education and pedagogy might as easily generate ‘capability deprivation’. It alerts us to the ways in which education produces both equity and inequity, belonging and exclusion. The capability approach asks that we look at what widening participation students are able to be and do, according to what they value for themselves. (Walker, 2006a, p. 108)

Similarly, Hart conducted research with 580 students in their final year of secondary schooling (sixth form) in South Yorkshire, UK and, using different qualitative



methods, explored from a capabilities perspective participants' aspirations for the future and the opportunities and support available to them to pursue these. From this research, she concludes that "access and presence within a formal educational setting does not indicate anything of the quality or meaning of the experience for a given individual" (2007, p.4). It is incorrect to assume, she contends, that increasing numbers "is synonymous with better forms of participation" (ibid). The current evaluations of HE policy in terms of numeric indicators such as enrollment or even completion and level of qualification achieved do not take account of the well-being an individual has achieved or the range of opportunities she has been able to choose from (Hart, 2007 p. 38).

In her dissertation (2012), which focuses on the University of the Orange Free State in South Africa and 20 feeder schools, Wilson-Strydom uses a mixed methods approach to examine the transition from high school to university.<sup>18</sup> One of the outcomes of this ambitious research is the production of an ideal-theoretical list, building on the work of Walker (2006a), and then a more refined pragmatic list of capabilities for HE transition in South Africa. The seven capabilities Wilson-Strydom ultimately identifies as important for this transition "within an over-arching commitment to social justice and the promotion of the well-being of students" (p. xviii) are: practical reason; knowledge and imagination; learning disposition; social relations and social networks; respect, dignity and recognition; emotional health and reflexivity; and language competence and confidence. The study also identifies various conversion factors affecting the

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<sup>18</sup> In this study, Wilson-Strydom analyses data on educational practices and students' experiences and aspirations generated through the South African High School Survey of Learner Engagement (SAHSSLE) completed by 2816 learners in Grades 10, 11 and 12 in 2009; qualitative reflections on school experiences, plans for university study and "university knowledge" completed by a smaller sample of 33 Grade 12 students; and qualitative data using a variety of methods (focus group, written descriptions, and drawings) from a total of 270 students in 2009 and 2010 on their first-year university experiences.

opportunities available to students and their ability to convert available resources into capabilities. In so doing, Wilson-Strydom highlights what the university could do to better facilitate the transition and what it could do in partnership with high schools in the area. Apart from a few references, however, gender does not feature prominently in Wilson-Strydom's study in which racial, ethnic (language) and class inequalities receive much greater attention.

While Wilson-Strydom is concerned with the workings of racial and class inequality in the HE context of South Africa and Walker and Hart with the UK, the implications for gender inequality in HEIs in the Ethiopian context are similar. Failure to examine women's gendered experiences in HEIs anywhere ignores the constraints and "corrosive disadvantages" (Wolf & de-Shalit, 2007) that are institutionally embedded and tend to (re)produce gender inequality (Mama, 2003; Mama & Barnes 2007). At the same time, what is left unexamined are potential social arrangements and "institutional conditions of possibility" (Walker, 2006a) that can challenge the prevailing order and enhance the ability of women to both participate *in* HE and develop the capabilities expected to be gained *through* HE (see next chapter for fuller discussion).

### **Conclusion**

This review has noted the paucity of in-depth qualitative research on women teachers in the African context and on the secondary school level and urban contexts in particular. This points to the need for an integrated and contextualized understanding of the constellation of factors constraining the participation of female teachers in the profession, including urban secondary schools, and how women teachers come to exercise agency in this context. There is, moreover, a need to understand the intersection

of constraints facing all teachers with gendered constraints facing women in particular. The capability approach, foregrounding concepts of well-being and agency, allows us to consider more closely what women teachers value themselves, why and in what ways they are constrained or not from pursuing personal and professional goals.

Additionally, this review has addressed the value of bringing together research on women's experiences in higher education (university and teacher education) with teaching experiences (especially early years of teaching). The existing literature on teachers—limited in gender analysis and piecemeal—does not look at these stages together or the compounding effects of capability deprivation for women at each stage. Existing studies, moreover, leave unexamined inequitable institutional policies, practices and interactions that are shaped by gendered cultural expectations, tending instead toward a narrow focus on access and a deficit model which sees the failure of women to succeed in university and in the teaching profession as a consequence of their individual failures. Also absent are the voices of women themselves, their perspectives, aspirations, and actions. By examining women's experiences across the process of becoming and working as a secondary school teacher from a capabilities perspective, we learn how the full and equitable inclusion of women in the teaching profession is being jeopardized and the possibilities for enhancing the well-being and agency of women at each stage.

## Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

[T]he capability *approach* is a proposition, and the proposition is this: that social arrangements should be evaluated according to the extent of freedom people have to promote or achieve functionings they value. If equality in social arrangements is to be demanded in any space—and most theories of justice advocate equality in some space—it is to be demanded in the space of capabilities. (Alkire, 2005, p. 122)

In the previous chapter, some of the emerging studies that apply the capability approach to research on higher education experiences and teachers' lives were reviewed. Central to those studies was an examination of factors affecting the well-being and agency of diverse individuals that result in inequality of various kinds. This dissertation, in its concern with factors constraining women's full and equal participation in secondary school teaching, their responses to those constraints and the implications for their lives and the teaching profession, is well-suited to employing a capabilities perspective in its investigation and builds on this research. The aim of this chapter, then, is to provide a fuller introduction to the capability approach and some of its core concepts as used in this study so as to allow the reader to make better sense of the analysis of findings.

### **Introduction to the Capability Approach**

The capability approach, developed by Amartya Sen and elaborated by others, offers a normative framework to conceptualize and evaluate individual well-being and social arrangements, and to design policies and proposals for social change, by considering the extent to which people are able to be and do what they have reason to value (Robeyns, 2005). This approach entails the normative claim that the freedom to achieve well-being is of primary moral importance. Its other claim is that freedom to

achieve well-being is to be understood in terms of people's capabilities—their real opportunities to be and do what they have reason to value (Robeyns, 2011; Walker & Unterhalter, 2007).

As an economist-philosopher Sen's concern has been with the limitations of prevalent accounts of well-being that focus exclusively on the material means to well-being (such as resources like income or wealth) or on subjective categories (such as utilitarian theories focused on happiness and satisfaction) (Sen, 1992). Drawing on various strands of philosophical thought (including Aristotle, Adam Smith and Karl Marx), Sen highlights human diversity and the difference between means and ends, arguing that the focus should not be on equality of resources (inputs) but in terms of the effective freedom people have to utilize resources to live the life they want to live and be the person they want to be.<sup>19</sup> Sen places emphasis on beings and doings which a person *values and has reason to value* because of his belief that human beings can reflect reasonably on what they value for themselves and others. This is also in line with his view that the prioritization of capabilities should be informed by a process of collective dialogue which should allow for the voicing of diverse opinions and views, particularly by those affected by such choices (Deneulin, 2009). In this way, Sen re-conceptualized poverty in terms of capability deprivation and argued that development and social policy should be concerned with protecting and enhancing freedoms and opportunities that allow for a wide capability set for all individuals (Sen, 1999).

The capability approach, which Sen has developed gradually over more than two decades and purposefully left under-specified, has since been applied to a wide variety of

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<sup>19</sup> In this regard, the capability approach is often associated with the Aristotelian inspired human development approach in which it is understood that “wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking, for it is merely useful for the sake of something else” (Aristotle, cited in Sen, 2009:53).

disciplines and contexts and has been expanded by many scholars, most notably political philosopher Martha Nussbaum who has advanced it in a somewhat different direction.<sup>20</sup> The approach has been used most prominently in development studies and policymaking, welfare economics, social policy, and social and political philosophy (see Robeyns, 2006) and more recently in education research and policy studies (Tickly & Barrett, 2011; Walker & Unterhalter, 2007 among many others). Its open-ended and under-specified nature has allowed for this wide usage but also for differences in interpretation (Gasper, 2007). Most scholars concur that the capability approach can be conceived of “as a flexible and multi-purpose framework, rather than a precise theory of well-being” (Robeyns, 2011, p.2).

### **Core Concepts**

#### **Functionings and Capabilities**

At the most basic level, functionings can be defined as “the various things a person may value doing or being” that make up their well-being (Sen 1999, p.75). Examples of the former (the ‘beings’) are being well-nourished, being educated, being part of a supportive social network. Examples of ‘doings’ are working, studying, taking part in public debate, caring for a child. In this sense, functionings are the subjects of capabilities, that is, what a person is, wants or should be capable to be and/or do, and are sometimes specified as *valued functionings* to denote that which a person has reason to value.<sup>21</sup> More specifically, however, the term functioning usually refers to the *achieved*

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<sup>20</sup> For the most part, it is Sen’s approach which is drawn on in this dissertation, although aspects of Nussbaum’s contributions are also included.

<sup>21</sup> This is the way in which functionings are primarily used in Chapter 8 of this dissertation where the values and personal well-being of teachers are discussed.

state or activity that is valued (i.e., achieved outcomes).<sup>22</sup> In this sense, a person's functioning and capability are closely related but distinct:

A functioning is an achievement, whereas a capability is the ability to achieve. Functionings are, in a sense, more directly related to living conditions, since they *are* different aspects of living conditions. Capabilities, in contrast, are notions of freedom, in the positive sense: what real opportunities you have regarding the life you may lead. (Sen 1987, p. 36)

Capabilities are, thus, defined by Sen as a person's substantive freedom or real opportunities to achieve (valued) functionings, and the distinction between functionings and capabilities is between the realized and the effectively possible. Such a distinction is important analytically, although somewhat blurred in application. It is significant in the case, for example, of two students who both receive failing grades on their final exam but one has failed as a result of spending most of his time socializing with friends and not studying enough while the other was given a failing grade because she refused to have sex with her lecturer. Behind equal outcomes, therefore, "may lie very different stories, and it is the difference that is germane to thinking about justice and equality" (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 4). In some instances, however, capabilities can only be evaluated by examining the functioning or the functioning may very accurately indicate the presence of the capability so that the distinction is in application less important.<sup>23</sup> An advantage of qualitative research in this regard is that it does not rely on isolated indicators and can effectively open up the relationship between functionings and capabilities.

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<sup>22</sup> To reinforce this meaning, functionings used in this way are sometimes specified in this dissertation, despite the redundancy, as *achieved functionings*.

<sup>23</sup> For example in research on domestic violence, we can make the plausible assumption that no one in a household wishes to suffer physical harm at the hands of another and so being physically injured by another member of the household can be taken as an indication of the lack of ability to protect one's body from harm (lack of the capability of bodily integrity) (Robeyns, 2003, p. 14).

In Sen's original work, "capability" refers to the full set of attainable beings and doings (functionings) that a person is able to attain. However, he and other scholars have since used the term in the way described above, to refer to the genuine opportunity to achieve specific functionings. Nussbaum and many of Sen's commentators employ the plural (capabilities) such that "capability approach" and "capabilities approach" are now used interchangeably by many authors.

For some authors, such as Nussbaum and Gasper, capabilities are further specified and somewhat differently conceptualized. In her more recent work, Nussbaum uses the term "combined capabilities" (in shorthand "capabilities") to refer to the combination of external and internal capabilities. *Internal capabilities* or personal powers she defines as "the characteristics of a person (personality traits, intellectual and emotional capacities, states of bodily fitness and health, internalized learning, skills of perception and movement)" (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 20), while *external capabilities* are the opportunities and freedoms stemming from the social, economic, cultural, environmental circumstances of a person's life. In this sense, capabilities "are not just the abilities residing inside a person but also the freedoms or opportunities created by a combination of personal abilities and the personal, social and economic environment" (ibid.). Any actor wanting to enhance people's capabilities, therefore, should try to enhance their internal capabilities as well as shape the external conditions in such a way that they are capabilities-enhancing. This overall approach is not very different from Sen's (see discussion below of conversion factors with respect to external conditions). However, while Sen emphasizes only the opportunity or freedom dimension of capabilities, Nussbaum incorporates skills, capacities and opportunities. This specification is a helpful



one, particularly in educational research where the role of education may be seen as critical to enhancing and expanding “internal capabilities” (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007).

In a similar vein, Gasper (1997, 2002) proposes making a distinction between what he refers to as “o-capabilities” and “s-capabilities” as complementary parts of a person’s capability set. This is not so much a substantial distinction as analytical, wherein it is suggested that capacities, skills, abilities and attitude can be understood as constituting “s-capabilities” (“s” referring to “skill” and “substantive—see Gasper 1997), while socially structured and constrained life-paths available to a person constitute “o-capabilities” (“o” referring to “option” and “opportunity”) (Gasper, 2002). Likewise, in the context of her work on higher education, Walker suggests that capabilities should be understood as both opportunities (i.e., opportunity freedom) and capacities that can be fostered (Walker, 2006, p. 128). To the extent possible, effort is made in this dissertation to clarify the usage of the term capabilities and the distinction between o-capabilities or external capabilities and s-capabilities or internal capabilities and capacities when employed in this way.

### **Resources, Conversion Factors and the Importance of Human Diversity**

In addition to the distinction between functionings and capabilities, another important distinction made in the capability approach is between functionings and resources or commodities (Robeyns, 2005).<sup>24</sup> This is not to say that there is no connection between resources and functionings. Material commodities, goods and services are of fundamental importance to human well-being, and many analyses identify valid connections between resources and capabilities (Deneulin, 2009). Resources can be

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<sup>24</sup> The characteristic of a good enable a functioning. For example, the characteristic of a bike that enables the functioning of mobility is that it takes people places faster than walking.

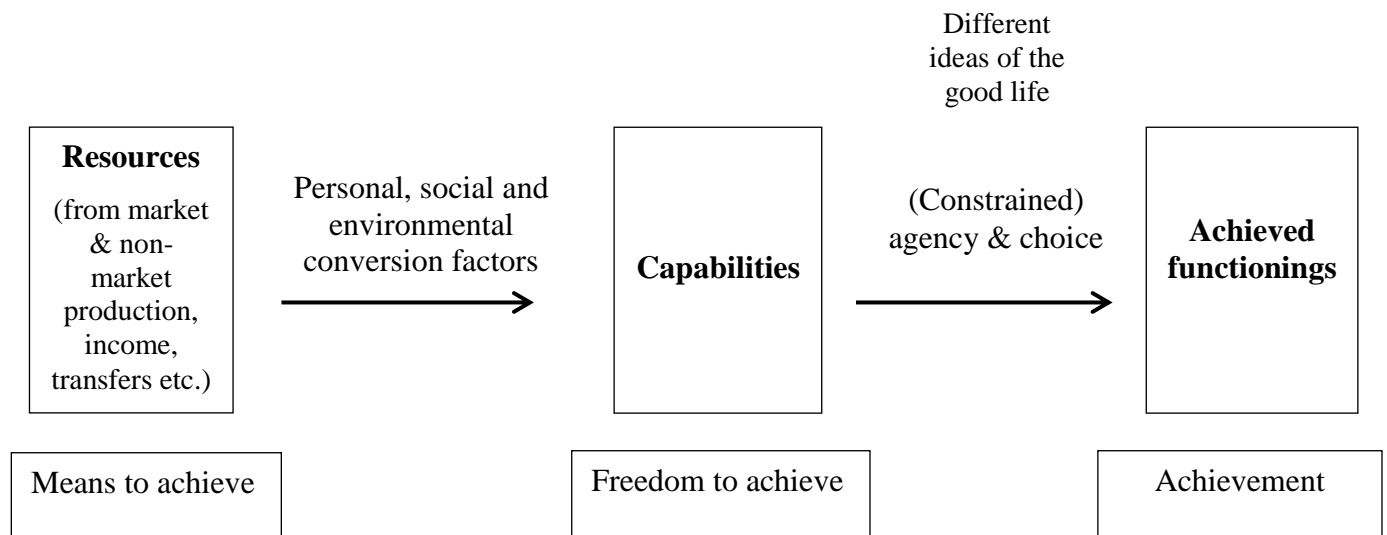
viewed as “instruments” for the enhancement of human freedom (Dreze & Sen, 2002, p. 3, cited in Robeyns, 2003, p. 13). However, Sen argues that “instead of focusing on the means that might facilitate a good life,” attention should be turned to “the actual living that people manage to achieve” and the freedom that people have to achieve the lives they value (Sen, 1999, p. 73). The capability approach, as earlier noted, thus, draws on a different information base—focusing instead on the space of capabilities—from other common theories of well-being or inequality, such as welfare economics which is concerned with income (Robeyns, 2005).

For one thing, Sen recognizes that material inputs may not be adequate for the achievement of all functionings, such as being respected for example. Very importantly, the capability approach also recognizes that equalizing resources (inputs) is not necessarily enough to ensure equality of outcomes or of substantive freedoms for different persons because people’s ability to convert the same resources into functionings varies greatly (Sen, 1992). The real freedoms that people have to fashion their own way of living, to convert particular resources into commodities, may be objectively constrained by a host of social, historical, geographical and climatic factors. From this perspective, if policies focus solely on distribution and equalizing access to resources they will likely disadvantage certain groups. Attention needs to be given, therefore, to the processes that convert means into ends (Sen, 2009). In this regard, *conversion factors* are defined as those factors that affect the extent to which an individual (or group) is able to make use of the available resources to develop capabilities and achieve valued outcomes. Conversion factors also influence whether individuals belonging to certain groups are

recognized socially and subjectively as having equal claims on resources and opportunities (Walker, 2006a, p.167).

Conversion factors can constrain or expand capabilities and are often delineated as *personal conversion factors* (e.g., intelligence, physical or artistic ability, enthusiasm for study, reading skills); *social conversion factors* (e.g., societal hierarchies, social norms, discriminatory practices, institutional and public policies); and *environmental conversion factors* (e.g., geographical location, climate, infrastructure) (Robeyns, 2005; Walker, 2006a).

Some of the components of the capability approach (several of which will be discussed further below) and the role resources have to play can be represented schematically in the following simplified diagram:



Source: Adapted from Robeyns, 2003, p.12; see also Robeyns, 2005, p.98

One of the strengths of the capability approach, therefore, is that it can attend to human diversity and complexities of context by taking into account interpersonal

variations in the conversion of resources into functionings (Robeyns, 2003). This is of importance to Sen, who notes that:

Investigations of equality—theoretical as well as practical—that proceed with the assumption of antecedent uniformity... thus miss out on a major aspect of the problem. Human diversity is no secondary complication (to be ignored, or to be introduced ‘later on’); it is a fundamental aspect of our interest in equality. (Sen 1992: xi)

While there is nothing inherently unequal about differences or the intersection of differences, they can become inequalities (Terzi, 2005; Walker & Unterhalter, 2007). When power, recognition and resources are aligned with gender categories, for example, biological difference is transformed into social inequality.

When considering issues of justice, therefore, it is important not merely to ask whether different people have access to the same resources or have achieved the same outcome, but rather, whether different people had the same opportunities to achieve the outcome (Walker, 2006). Bringing into view processes of conversion guards against taking any one group as the norm or presuming that “neutrality” with respect to gender, race or other category is in the best interests of achieving equality. Moreover, agency and choice are central but they need to be considered in relation to existing contexts, including social structures and institutional conditions. While not unique to the contributions of Sen, the capability approach foregrounds this interaction of agents and context through the concept of conversion factors (Wilson-Strydom, 2012).

### **Agency and Freedom**

Agency, or more specifically “agency freedom,” within the capability approach refers to “a person’s ability to pursue and realize goals that she values and has reason to

value” (Deneulin, 2009, p. 30).<sup>25</sup> In Sen’s words an agent is “someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives, whether or not we assess them in terms of some external criteria as well” (Sen, 1999, p. 19). Agency, thus, involves both the capacity to choose between options and the ability to do what one chooses (Walker, 2006, p. 34), or what Robeyns and Crocker refer to as “the power to act and to be effective” (2009, p. 75).

Importantly, the concept of agency within the capability approach also serves to “expand the horizons of concern beyond a person’s own well-being” (Deneulin, 2009, p. 37). This becomes critical in the distinction made between agency and well-being goals (Robeyns, 2005, p. 102). Agency includes goals other than personal well-being, such as those relating to the good of other people, of the environment, of arts or sciences. It, thus, incorporates actions that are not beneficial or are even (potentially or actually) detrimental to the agent’s individual well-being. For example, a person may use their capability of voice to speak up on behalf of an injustice in their workplace, even though they may lose their job, or a person who has the capability to own and drive a car to work may instead decide to exert extra effort and endure inclement weather to ride a bike or walk out of concern for the environment.

Sen argues that agency is intrinsically important for individual freedom but also instrumental for collective action and democratic participation (Sen, 1987). Agency, thus, includes individual action as well as what one can do as a member of a group. In addition, whether an agent’s goals are in some way reasonable also matters, so that actions aimed at harming others, for example, are not considered as an exercise of

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<sup>25</sup> “Agency achievement” refers to a person’s success “in pursuit of the totality of her considered goals” (Sen, 1992, p. 52). Sen, moreover, recognizes the role of context which includes cultural and religious norms in influencing choice and the exercise of agency.

agency. An agent's responsibility within a given context should also, according to Sen, be taken into account when he or she evaluates how to act (Deneulin, 2009, p. 38, drawing on Sen, 1985). This is relevant, for example, in considering teacher agency within a school context where teachers have certain formal responsibilities.

As Walker and Unterhalter note in the context of education, "in considering agency we need to ask if different [individuals] are recognized socially and educationally as having equal claims on resources and opportunities" (2007, p. 6). This returns us to the previous discussion of social conversion factors which foreground the interaction of structure and agency and the ways in which individual agency may be constrained. The notion of "adaptive preferences" is also helpful in highlighting how individuals belonging to disadvantaged groups in society can come to accept the "legitimacy of the unequal order" and adapt their preferences and perceptions of satisfaction accordingly (Sen, 1990, p. 126). Adaptive (also referred to as adapted) preferences may limit aspirations and perceptions of satisfaction as individuals adjust hopes to their probabilities, even when not in their interests, such that agency and well-being may be diminished rather than enhanced (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 6).<sup>26</sup> For example, women may moderate their career ambitions in a culture where men's participation in public life is more valued and women's value and identity is tied to caring for others within the home. This dissertation will highlight the relationships between structure and agency, as well as some of the ways in which adapted preferences feature in the lives of women as higher education students and teachers and the implications thereof.

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<sup>26</sup> As Nussbaum writes, such material and cultural (external) circumstances "affect the inner lives of people: what they hope for, what they love, what they fear, as well as what they are able to do" (2000, p. 31).

## Concepts of Advantage

A distinction is made in the capability approach, as already indicated, between agency and well-being and between freedom and achievement. A person's capability can be evaluated, according to Sen, in terms of four separate but related "concepts of advantage":

- well-being freedom (the opportunity to achieve well-being)
- well-being achievement (the extent to which well-being has been achieved)
- agency freedom (the opportunity to pursue and ability to bring about the goals one values)
- agency achievement (the extent to which (the totality of) valued goals have been achieved) (Bucker, 2012, p. 53)

Depending on their nature, different evaluations require attention to different concepts of advantage (Sen, 2009, p. 287, referenced in Buckler, 2012, p. 63).<sup>27</sup>

The focus of this study is primarily on the well-being freedom of women as university students and teachers, at times assessed by examining achieved functionings (for example, what housing arrangements teachers are living in as an indication of their capability to secure adequate housing). In Chapter 9, there is a discussion of professional

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<sup>27</sup> The importance of such a distinction, while not necessarily salient in every study, is made apparent in the following story offered by Robeyns: "Suppose two sisters, Anna and Becca, live in a peaceful village in England and have the same levels of achieved well-being. Both believe that the power of global corporations is undermining democracy, and that governments should give greater emphasis to global justice. Anna decides to travel to Genoa to demonstrate against the G8 meetings, while Becca stays at home. At that moment, Anna is using her freedom of agency to voice some of her political concerns. However, the Italian police do not like the protesters and violate Anna's civil and political rights by beating her up in prison. Anna's achieved well-being has obviously been considerably lowered. Anna is given the option to sign a piece of paper declaring that she committed violence and is a member of an extreme-left organization (which will then give her a criminal record). If she does not sign, she will be kept in prison for an unspecified length of time. Anna, therefore, has a (highly constrained) option to trade her freedom of agency for a higher achieved well-being. Becca had the same potential agency but chose not to use it. She is concerned about human rights violations and the hollowing of democracy itself, but does not wish to sacrifice her achieved well-being for these goals." (2005, p. 102).

functionings valued by teachers and their ability to pursue such goals. Here, well-being freedom and agency freedom become blurred. A focus on agency freedom (see review of Buckler, 2012 in previous chapter) is useful because it foregrounds teacher agency and includes goals and actions of teachers that are not directed toward, or that go beyond, enhancing their own individual well-being. The ability to achieve valued professional goals, however, can also be considered as part of well-being within the sphere of teachers' professional lives (particularly when teachers view such goals as central to their sense of well-being and job satisfaction) and an examination of agency can be included in this. The issue of whether to focus on well-being or agency freedom is discussed again later but at this point it can be said that this dissertation is primarily concerned with the well-being freedom of women pre-service and in-service teachers, with aspects of agency freedom also being addressed.

### **Ethical Individualism**

Without going into the details of the debate, a common critique of the capability approach is that it is individualistic in nature, presumes that persons act alone and that the approach is concerned foremost with libertarian notions of self-actualization (see Robeyns, 2005 for a review). Robeyns offers a useful clarification in this regard, explaining that the capability approach embraces “ethical individualism” but not “methodological or ontological individualism.” The capability approach:

. . . postulates that individuals. . . are the *ultimate* units of moral concern. . . This, of course, does not imply that we should not evaluate social structures and societal properties, but ethical individualism implies that these structures and institutions will be evaluated *in virtue of* the causal



importance that they have for individual well-being. (Robeyns, 2005, p. 90)<sup>28</sup>

From this perspective, actions and policies should be judged by their effects on individual human beings, and each person should be considered as an end in their own right not as a means to some other end such as economic growth or social stability. Robeyns, thus, holds that “ethical individualism is not incompatible with an ontology that recognizes the connections between people, their social relations, and their social embeddedness” (2003, p. 44). While this argument is accepted by many scholars, it is questioned by some (see Dean, 2009; Deneulin, 2006; Gasper, 2003, Gasper & Severen, 2003). I will return to this issue and Sen’s emphasis on freedom in the conclusion of this study.

### **Selecting Capabilities: The Issue of Lists**

The capability approach has been purposefully left general and open by Sen who maintains that no single set of capabilities or functionings would be appropriate as a basis for measuring disadvantage in every situation (Alkire, 2005). On the other hand, Nussbaum (2000), who comes from a political philosophical position (Claassen, 2011) and is concerned with establishing the minimum requirements of justice, has argued for the need to construct a universal list of capabilities that should be available to all

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<sup>28</sup>Deneulin explains that “the reason Sen supports ethical individualism is that if the smallest fundamental unit of moral concern is any group, such as the family, the social group or the community, then analyses will systematically overlook any existing or potential inequalities *within* these units. For example, the deprivations particular to women and children have regularly been overlooked by analyses that focus on the household. Only if we probe into the well-being of each person do we have the possibility of discovering the relative under-nutrition, or subordination, of women” (2009, p. 49). The capability approach does not, by extension, hold that “society is built up from only individuals and nothing (but) individuals, and hence is nothing more than the sum of individuals and their properties” (which would be ontological individualism) (Robeyns, 2005, p. 90). Nor does it presume “that all social phenomena can be explained in terms of individuals and their properties” (methodological individualism) (ibid.).

citizens.<sup>29</sup> These two positions, and variations thereof, on the question of “what capabilities will there be on the list?” and how, when and by whom they should be determined (Robeyns, 2005, p.105), has generated much discussion in the capability literature. For Sen, greater importance is placed on processes of democratic deliberation and widened participation that allow for all those concerned (not just researchers and policy makers) to be involved in the selection of capabilities relevant to the circumstances at hand (Sen, 1992). The under-definition of his approach also allows for its growth and application to a wide range of contexts (Gasper, 2007).

Seeking a middle ground, Walker argues that “there is a valid case for a list, but this should be for a specific purpose, or evaluation, or critique; it should not be fixed or canonical, it should not be hierarchically ordered and it should in some way include participation and dialogue” (Walker, 2006, p. 49). These criteria have been followed by various researchers who have also developed further the process to be followed. For example, using Robeyn’s criteria to develop an *ideal list* of capabilities for assessment of educational equality in the context of South Africa (with specific focus on gender), Walker follows several steps: first identifying capabilities from the capability approach literature, then from public policy specific to that context, then from the views of school girls themselves, followed by engaging with other relevant lists and, finally, publically debating the list thus formulated (Walker, 2006).

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<sup>29</sup> The list of capabilities constructed by Nussbaum covers ten broad categories: life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses (including imagination and thought), emotions, practical reason, affiliation, other species, play and control over the environment (Nussbaum, 2000). She contends that her list is open-ended, humble and should be subject to development and interpretation and that her work leads towards the development of a list of “central human capabilities” which citizens in a country would have “the right to demand” (Robeyns, 2005, p. 103-105). Nussbaum’s efforts are an answer to the Aristotelian question: “What activities characteristically performed by human beings are so central that they seem definitive of a life that is truly human?” (Garrett, 2008, cited in Buckler, 2012, p. 52).

The formulation of a fully-developed capability list, ideal or pragmatic, is beyond the scope of this dissertation. More modestly, this study highlights capabilities valued by and relevant to research participants—as university students and teachers—which can inform policy discussions and contribute toward the potential development of lists for assessing teacher well-being and gender equality in the teaching profession in urban Ethiopia, as well as in Ethiopian HEIs. In Chapter 6, lists proposed by Walker (2007) and Wilson-Strydom (2012) with respect to HE participation are also drawn on. The formulation of formal lists, however, would require much broader participation and dialogue and close adherence to the criteria set by Robeyns (2003). The value of undertaking such a project is discussed in the recommendations offered at the end of this dissertation.

### **Education, Gender Equality and the Capability Approach**

In Sen’s writing, education (not always clearly distinguished from schooling), is viewed as a basic capability that affects the development and expansion of other capabilities. Others dispute whether education can itself be considered a basic capability (see Terzi, 2007 and Vaughen, 2007). Otto and Ziegler (2006) point out that education can not only be interpreted as a capability, but also as “capability input” and as “personal conversion factor.” For Sen, education is, problematically, conceived as an unqualified good for capability expansion and human freedom (Sen, 1999). Accordingly, “education” is expected to contribute substantially to the formation of a person’s capabilities to function and to pursue opportunities he or she values. It is seen as having important instrumental social, process, empowerment and (re)distributive roles (see Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 8).

Several education scholars have questioned, however, the extent to which education—more specifically formal education at different levels and in various contexts—is an unqualified good that contributes to the expansion of capabilities for all groups. Poor quality schooling, it has been pointed out, can prove a disadvantage that persists throughout life and certain experiences within school environments, for example sexual harassment, can result in “unfreedoms” (Unterhalter, 2003). Education researchers working within the capability framework ask questions about how valuable opportunities and capabilities are distributed through formal education and to whom, and how this maps over structures of inequality such as gender, race, etc. (Walker, 2006, p. 20). The capability approach is in this way useful to those concerned with the process dimensions of social justice and with the space of human action in which structures of inequality can potentially be contested and equalities advanced (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007). In this respect, education scholars using the capability perspective seek to clarify what ought to count as education (ibid, Walker & Mclean, 2010) and emphasize the importance of human diversity in the process of converting opportunities and resources into valued outcomes.

Vaughen (2007), moreover, has suggested that in applying the capabilities approach to education it is helpful to consider both the capability to participate *in* education as well as capabilities that can be expected to be developed *through* education.<sup>30</sup> She suggests that if “being formally educated” is considered as one type of functioning in itself, then the capability of a person to be educated can be defined as the freedom for that person to fully participate in the formal learning process. Beyond the

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<sup>30</sup> This is related to Subrahmanian’s analysis of rights to education, in education and through education (2005).

factors that enable a person to physically attend school, this also includes “being able to participate and understand, and engage in learning confidently and successfully” (Vaughen, 2007, p. 116). This concern is central to the capabilities literature on higher education and social justice reviewed earlier. Once a student is participating in education, “it is possible to consider the capabilities that can be gained through education (or not gained, or even possibly lost).” “In this case, analysis is concerned with the contribution of education to other life functionings, as opposed to purely education functionings” (Vaughen, 2007, p. 117). This latter aspect might include consideration of s-capabilities that an individual is expected to develop through participation in education that are necessary for successful professional engagement in the future.

Gender equality in education, and in social relations and actions linked to education, is understood to be important within the capability framework because it aids in the establishment of conditions in which a wider capability set is available to both sexes. Concern with gender equality in education is also important according to Sen “because it alerts us to differential conversion processes linked to gender and other social divisions with regard to how resources are utilized to establish the capability set” (Sen, 2003, cited in Unterhalter, 2007). This is an important point in the context of higher education, for example, in which it is commonly argued that gender equality follows from access to university because women and men are presumed as students to have access to the same resources and opportunities once enrolled in university. It is also pertinent to the more general assumption that gender-neutral policies serve all women and men equally. The capabilities approach, in contrast, “broadens the frame for evaluation [of gender inequality in education] suggesting more complex processes must

be examined as gendered individuals are educated under conditions marked by gendered social arrangements” (Unterhalter 2007, loc 1856 of 5474 in Kindle Edition).

### **Other Guiding Concepts**

Beyond the capability approach, there are a few key concepts and related theoretical contributions that inform this study, which are briefly addressed below.

#### **Gender**

Definitions of gender in social science literature vary and the ways in which gender has been used as a category of analysis are numerous and confusing. I use the term gender in this dissertation to refer to a system of stratification which centers on the social attribution of particular traits, competencies and roles to individuals (categorized as “male” or “female”) on the basis of biological reproductive difference. This social construction of difference commonly serves, in various ways in different social contexts, as a basis for inequality and domination. Gender, thus, comes to define a systemic arrangement of opportunities and marginalization (Ridgeway, 2011; Risman, 2004). Gender arrangements are socially reproduced and appear unchanging because of the power of structures to constrain individual action. However, by virtue of being socially constructed, gender arrangements are always subject to change (Connell, 2002). Moreover, gender may also be understood as a process (perhaps better referred to as “gendering”) which requires that we attend “to the continuous ways in which gender is made and remade in everyday interactions and by institutions” (Oyěwùmí, 2010, p. 2). An assumption I make is that gender is universal as a stratification system, but its

particular configuration, workings and significance in any given society and context at any given time varies and requires empirical examination.

The importance of examining the intersectionality (BaccaZinn & Thornton Dill, 1994; Collins, 1990) of various axes of domination and stratification is also recognized in this research. I endeavor in this regard to adopt a "both/and" approach (Collins, 1998), in which gender is not studied in isolation—recognizing that the subjective experience of actual human beings is always of intersecting inequalities—while at the same time attending to contextual specificities that distinguish the mechanisms (re)producing inequality by gender and other categorical divisions (ibid.). In this respect, the intersection of gender with class and rural-urban divisions feature prominently in this study.

### **Experience, Structure and Agency**

A great deal can be said about agency and structure but central to this study, in addition to what has already been discussed in relation to the capability approach, is an understanding of the recursive nature of the relationship between them. Molla and Cuthbert, drawing on McNay (2008), nicely connect agency, structure and experience in writing that:

Experience encompasses what has happened to individuals in temporal and socio-spatial contexts, and its impact on them. . . . Importantly, subjective experiences are expressions of positioned interactions of agents in a system of social structures. Hence, the process and contents of lived experiences and meanings agents attribute to them shed light on the dynamics of social space—the social structures and individual agency. (2014, p. 760)

Attending to social structures highlights “the tendency of patterns of (social) relations to be reproduced, even when actors engaging in relations are unaware of the

patterns or do not desire their reproduction” (Sewell, 2005, p. 126). But, as Sewell, Giddens, Bourdieu and other social theorists contend, agency is constitutive of structures—both their reproduction and transformation. While social structures shape and often constrain human action, human agency and creativity contribute to the production, reproduction and disruption of social structures.<sup>31</sup>

Importantly, actors vary in the extent of their control of social relations and in the scope of their transformative powers. This is because structures, and the human agency constituted by them, are laden with power differences that give people knowledge of different schemas and access to different kinds and amounts of resources and hence different possibilities for transformative action. “Structures, in short, empower agents differentially, which also implies that they embody the desires, intentions, and knowledge of agents differentially as well” (Sewell, 2005, p. 145). As Risman notes in her discussion of gender, "social structure as the context of daily life creates action indirectly by shaping actors' perceptions of their interests and directly by constraining choice" (2004, p. 432).<sup>32</sup> The study of lived experiences, therefore, should include both "ways in which actors are caught within structures of power and domination" and "their capacity for practical reflections" (McNay, 2008, p. 183).

Agency and the factors that constrain agency are addressed in this dissertation in several areas. One is in relation to the exercise of agency by women in the process of becoming a secondary school teacher, for example in contending with constraints to their participation as an undergraduate university student. Another is the agency exercised by

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<sup>31</sup> Production and reproduction are widely used terms in social theory. “Disrupting” gender inequality is my own term, which I understand to refer to instances in which the prevailing order is unsettled, questioned, challenged and possibly transformed. The emphasis is not on whether such action or expression results in enduring change but on revealing when and in what ways the status quo comes to be called into question.

<sup>32</sup> This is also reflected in the notion of adapted preferences described above.



women as teachers in pursuit of valued personal and professional goals. A final aspect is in consideration of instances where individual and collective agency is directed toward disrupting gender inequality, where such a goal is valued and acted on.

### **Parity of Participation**

Usage of the term participation in this dissertation merits a brief explanation here as well. It is used in line with Nancy Fraser's notion of "parity of participation," which "requires social arrangements that permit all (adult) members of society to interact with one another as peers in social life" (p. 29, 2007). These arrangements are *material*—"the distribution of material resources must be such as to ensure participants' independence and 'voice'"—*cultural*—"institutionalized patterns of cultural value must express equal respect for all participants and ensure equal opportunity for achieving social esteem" (ibid.)—and *political*—involving removal of institutional obstacles to the realization of justice and inclusion in the community that is entitled to make justice claims on one another and the procedures that structure public processes of contestation (2005, 2008).

Participation occurs throughout social life in a variety of arenas and means something different in each arena. "No single formula, quantitative or otherwise, can suffice for every case," depending rather on the nature of the social interaction in question (2007, p. 29). Importantly for Fraser, "parity" is not an issue of numbers but a "qualitative condition ... of being a *peer*, of being on *par* with others, of interacting with them on equal footing" (2007, p. 28). This ideal also incorporates an understanding that justice requires participatory parity across all major axes of social differentiation, such as gender, race, ethnicity and class, which means evaluating whether measures aimed at redressing one sort of disparity are likely to exacerbate another.

Central to Fraser's conceptualization of a multi-dimensional approach to gender and justice is reframing of the notion of recognition, which is of particular significance in this study. "When...institutionalized patterns of cultural value constitute some actors as inferior....as less than full partners in social interaction, then we can speak of *misrecognition* and *status subordination*" (2003, p. 27, italics in the original). Recognition in terms of social status is not, therefore, aimed at valorizing femininity or difference but at overcoming subordination by replacing institutionalized patterns of value that impede gender parity with those that foster it (Fraser, 2003).

Fraser's analysis raises awareness of how certain remedies in isolation, without consideration of the different dimensions of gender inequality, may prove ineffectual in advancing the overarching goal of parity of participation. For example, affirmative action policies that institute quotas for women and lower entry qualifications into higher education may have a tendency to stigmatize women (as "under-achievers"), which is further aggravated by high rates of failure and dropout among women. Similarly, consideration needs to be given to how efforts oriented toward redistribution may be co-joined with cultural change aimed at revaluing teaching work and critically examining the gendered associations that code it in different ways. In this vein, Mama (2003) highlights the limits of emphasizing affirmative action policies, which focus on integrating women into mainstream institutions as they are, rather than transformative strategies that challenge inequitable procedures, practices and rituals in these institutions.

With respect to gender equality in the teaching occupation the conception of parity of participation takes us beyond numerical representation, as important a component as that is, to consider the terms of women's inclusion into the occupation.

"Parity of participation" is Fraser's answer to Sen's question "equality of what?" but whereas some see Sen's focus on capabilities as supplanting Fraser's (Robeyns, 2003), I see the two as complementing each other in certain respects, as do Tickly and Barrett (2011). Both point to various social, economic and political factors that limit the ability of disadvantaged groups, such as women, to convert the resources available to them into opportunities they value. A consideration of capabilities opens up in this research an examination of what may be needed to foster parity of participation for women in the context of higher HE and teaching.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an introduction to a body of theoretical literature on the capability approach that has grown substantially through the contributions of many scholars over nearly three decades. It is difficult to do justice to this rich field but it is hoped that the explanation provided of some of the key concepts within it will aid in making sense of the analysis of findings offered in this dissertation.

It may be helpful to reiterate in concluding this chapter that the capability approach is primarily drawn on in this study in the analysis of findings rather than in shaping the research methodology (see Chapter 5). In general, it is drawn on as a normative framework in which the well-being and agency of women teachers is made central. Conceptually, it aids in addressing the question "how are women constrained" by giving specific focus to what is being constrained and the means by which this happens. In this regard, the capability framework is put to somewhat different use in each chapter. In Chapter 6, in which the experiences of women as undergraduate students are examined, research participants' accounts are used to identify key capabilities that were

important to enhancing their participation and successful completion of university study but which were limited or constrained by various factors. Women's exercise of agency in response to constraints in this context, and the further complicating impact of adaptive preferences on participation, are also addressed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the conversion factors at play and of the capabilities that emerge to be of importance to this stage as they relate to those identified in lists developed by Wilson-Strydom (2012) and Walker (2006).

In Chapter 7 on experiences during post-graduate teacher education, faculty and student narratives are analyzed to identify constraining factors which limit the development of a strong and positive teacher identity and of capabilities officially valued by the MoE (as stated in the objectives and guidelines for the PGDT program), as well as fail to address women's prior disadvantage and their full inclusion in the profession.

Chapter 8 then examines the personal well-being of women teachers during their early years of teaching by examining the beings and doings they value and the constraints to achieving these valued functionings. Central to this analysis is the issue of limited pay as a resource constraint, which the capability approach pushes us to go beyond and ask what that income is valued for by women, the way gender affects women's ability to convert resources into well-being, and the relationship of this to constrained occupational mobility.

Finally, Chapter 9 considers what women teachers value professionally, the constraints they face in achieving these goals and the implications for well-being, agency and engagement. These findings and analysis are then used to provide recommendations

in the concluding chapter which draw further on the capabilities framework and illustrate its value.

## Chapter 4: Education in Ethiopia

In this chapter I will provide a brief history of the education system in Ethiopia and describe developments of relevance to this study with respect to secondary schooling, higher education, teacher education and the teaching profession. Statistics and policies pertaining to women's and girls' participation are discussed in each of these sections.

### Background

Ethiopia is a very large country and the second most populous in Africa, estimated in 2013 to have a population of 94.1 million with over 50% below the age of 18 (UIS, 2014). It is also extremely diverse in all respects—physically, culturally, linguistically, and in terms of urbanization and poverty levels, such that there is no “typical” region. Ethiopia is amongst the poorest countries in the world: an estimated 26% of the population lives on less than \$0.60 a day<sup>33</sup> and the country ranks 173 out of 186 countries in the UNDP Human Development Index (2015).<sup>34</sup> Despite a long history of literacy, with its own surviving indigenous system of writing, it is also one of the most educationally disadvantaged with considerable disparities between regions and levels of schooling. Primary school net enrollment rates (NER) vary from above 100% in some regions, such as Addis Ababa, to 60 % in Afar and drop dramatically across the country at the secondary level to a national NER of 20% for lower secondary and 5.5% for upper secondary (MoE, 2014).<sup>35</sup> Even though only 19% of Ethiopia's population live in urban areas (NHDR, 2015) and 80.4% of all primary enrollments (grades 1-8) are in rural

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<sup>33</sup> 2012/13 data cited in Ethiopia's 2015 National Human Development Report (NHDR): <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/nhdr2015-ethiopia-en.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> Ethiopia has a Human Development Index of 0.43 (NHDR, 2015).

<sup>35</sup> Secondary school gross enrollment rates (GER) are almost double NERs; 39 for lower secondary and 10 for upper secondary (MoE, 2014).

schools, a disproportionate 81% of secondary enrollments (grades 9-12) are in urban schools (MoE, 2014).

Since the mid-1990s, with establishment of the federal democratic government under the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), there has been a dramatic and rapid expansion of education at all levels (VSO, 2009). This has meant that millions more children are now accessing education, particularly at the primary level. This rapid expansion has come with its own challenges and needs to be viewed in historical context. Moreover, recent educational expansion has occurred in the context of economic reforms which, under the leadership of the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, turned Ethiopia into what is often lauded as one of the fastest growing economies in Africa (NHDR, 2015; World Bank, 2012).<sup>36</sup> Such growth has been uneven, accompanied by increased income disparities, rising costs of basic goods and services, and a high unemployment rate among school graduates (Ali, 2011; Geda et al. 2009; VSO, 2009). The nature of educational reform in the context of widespread economic liberalization and growing inequality are the subject of critical discussion among Ethiopian researchers (Dahlstrom & Lemma, 2008; Faris, 2011; Hussein, 2006; Molla, 2013; Negash, 2006), while policy debates and related research continue to focus on primary (mostly rural) education as framed by earlier MDGs, now SDGs, and EFA goals.

Numerous national and education-specific policies have made gender parity an objective, resulting in gains across sectors and in female student representation in basic education in particular (MoE, 2010). However, the narrow framing of these policies and constraints on institutional capacity in a context of rapid expansion and managerial

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<sup>36</sup> Ethiopia had a GDP growth rate of 9.7% in 2012/13 (NHDR, 2015).

neoliberal reforms (Molla, 2013) have limited advances in gender equality in important ways that will be touched on in this chapter and expanded upon later in the dissertation.

### **History of Education in Ethiopia**

The literature on the history of education in Ethiopia indicates that “modern” education began in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, when Emperor Menelik opened the first formal public school in 1907. This marked the decline of an elaborate religious schooling system that had historically served the educational needs of the Empire (Negash, 1996; Wagaw, 1979).<sup>37</sup> While Ethiopia was never formally colonized, the education system in place today is by no means “homegrown” and its pattern of development shows marked similarities to other parts of the continent (Negash, 2006; Faris, 2011).<sup>38</sup>

Since the 1940s,<sup>39</sup> Ethiopia has experienced three systems of political governance, each with a distinguishable education policy: The imperial system (1941 to 1974); the military/socialist system (1974-1991); and the current federal system of governance which came into full operation after 1994 (Negash, 2006). The changes and continuities across these political systems, which have each made education a central arena for

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<sup>37</sup> Although limited in scope, these religious establishments still operate in rural areas today. The contribution of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the development of a local script and of the Quranic schools in safeguarding the survival of Islam in this part of the continent are worthy of note (Teferra, 1997).

<sup>38</sup> Over the course of the 20th century, there have been a number of dominant foreign influences on formal education in Ethiopia—France (1910 to the 1920s), Italy (1930s), Britain (1940–1950s), the United States and UNESCO (1960s), Russia and Germany (then East Germany) (1970–1980s), and a mix of USAID, World Bank and EU member country influence since the 1990s.

<sup>39</sup> The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which had a virtual monopoly over education in the country, opposed the establishment of modern education and the increasing role of foreign missionaries, which was seen to be undermining its values (Markakis, 1974). This significantly slowed the pace of expansion of modern education up to the 1940s.



playing out political agendas, is a common structuring theme in much of the literature on education in Ethiopia.

1941 to 1970 is considered in some respects as the hey-day of modern education in Ethiopia. According to Negash, “the education sector with his late majesty the Emperor [Haile Selassie II] as frontline minister was by far the best staffed and financed” (2006, p. 12). It catered to a small and largely urban population and in this sense could be characterized as elitist. By 1970 total enrollment at the primary level was approximately 10% and approximately 4% at the secondary (ibid.). The first secular secondary school, the Haile Selassie 1<sup>st</sup> Secondary School for boys, was opened in 1943 in Addis Ababa, followed in the same year by a school for girls.<sup>40</sup> Government schools slowly expanded during the 1950s and 1960s in major towns (Zewdie & Bridges, 2001).

While there was an urban bias to the location of secondary schools, it was not the children of the ruling elite that were the main beneficiaries of this education but rather children from poor and average-income households who for various reasons were in close proximity to cities and towns (Negash, 2006; Wagaw, 1979). Students were offered free tuition, often with room and board, clothing and other supplies. Prior to the late 1960s employment for graduates were plentiful and salaries reflected academic qualifications, such that children from humble backgrounds found themselves making more than ten times their parents after just a few years of education. For some this was followed by opportunities to obtain advanced degrees in universities abroad. This narrative of success through education remains very strong in Ethiopia and underpins the hopes and

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<sup>40</sup> There were also Catholic and Protestant missionary schools, technical secondary school and a commercial secondary school during this period. The technical school marked a significant departure from traditional religious education in which manual skills (e.g., woodwork, metal work) were considered taboo and the reserve of a few hereditary families (Zewdie & Bridges, 2001).

aspirations attached to higher education today. Indeed, many of Ethiopia's contemporary politicians and leaders are the products of this era. However, by 1970 already close to 25% of secondary school graduates were unemployed (Negash, 2006).<sup>41</sup>

A host of factors, including a highly politicized university student population that took the role of the opposition, growing numbers of unemployed secondary school graduates, famine in rural areas that had been widely neglected, rising fuel costs and the broader international political context, culminated in 1974 in the deposition of the Emperor and the rise to power of a military socialist regime commonly referred to as "the Dergue" (Negash, 2006). One historian has described the changes in education under the Dergue by noting that "a fairly good education for a relatively small number of children had under the socialist regime been transformed into quite a poor education for a much larger number of children" (Clapham 1990, cited in Negash 2006). The numbers of students rose dramatically while resources declined. The regime tried to make the most of existing facilities and started a shift system in schools where one group of students studied in the morning and another in the afternoon (in some places there was a third shift). Ethiopians were actively recruited as teachers to replace expatriates who exited the country in large numbers, although many received inadequate training. While textbooks remained in English, most teachers were taught in Amharic, which fit well with the state's efforts to minimize ethnic divisions and promote nationalism. Despite the emphasis on manufacturing and industrial production the country remained largely rural

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<sup>41</sup> Outside influences on curricula and planning of education in Ethiopia were considerable during this period. The vast majority of teachers during the late 1940s and 1950s were foreigners, mainly American Peace Corps volunteers, Lutheran missionaries, and teachers from India (Negash, 1996). The curriculum from this time has been criticized as largely imported and irrelevant to Ethiopian society (Fikre, 2007; Tesfa, 2004). From the late 1950s, UNESCO, the World Bank and USAID were major players in the planning of education in Ethiopia. One of the most persuasive messages preached at this time throughout the developing world was the role of education in economic development, even though there were already challenges in creating enough jobs in the formal economy for graduates (Negash, 2006).

so that employment for these youth continued to be a problem. For most Ethiopians, this period was one marked by considerable repression and widespread poverty.

By 1991, the Dergue was defeated by regional/ethnic armed insurgents and a transition period followed. By 1994 the current federal system of governance, based on ethnic regions, came into operation. The education system was on the verge of collapse, with primary GER in 1993/94 at 30% for boys and 19% for girls (Negash, 2006). The government launched a 20-year education sector plan, which at the time of this research was in its fourth phase (2010/2011 – 2014/2015). Its main goal was to “improve educational quality, equity, and relevance with special emphasis on primary education for all by 2015” (MoE, 2006, p. 109). There has since 1994 been a dramatic overhaul of the education system. Some of the main features involve a further shift in language policy to mother tongue instruction at the primary levels (but not higher, which Negash (2006) and others consider a serious hindrance to quality education) and decentralization of administration to regional government at those levels.<sup>42</sup> Secondary education, including teacher education, remains centralized at the federal level, however.<sup>43</sup>

Schooling in Ethiopia is currently comprised of four cycles: lower primary (grades 1 – 4), upper primary (grades 5-8), lower secondary (grades 9 and 10) and upper secondary (grades 11 and 12—commonly referred to as “preparatory school,” leading to university). There has been considerable increase in the number of children enrolled in

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<sup>42</sup> Other significant reforms in this period include increasing the period of primary schooling from six to eight years, divided into two cycles of Grades 1-4 and 5-8 (there are secondary schools covering just grades 9 and 10, while a small number incorporate grades 11 and 12.), while reducing the number of subjects taught, and the move from half to a full-day’s schooling in urban areas (Camfield, 2011).

<sup>43</sup> The federal government, the regions and the Woredas (equivalent to a county) share the responsibility for education. At the federal level, the MoE sets out policy, guidance and standards. Regional governments are responsible for the oversight of the training of primary school teachers, for providing primary textbooks and for adapting the primary syllabus to local conditions. Woredas are responsible for paying and recruiting primary and secondary teachers, and for supervision of primary and secondary teachers (VSO, 2009).

primary education in recent decades and a focused commitment to increasing gender parity, although much variation exists (MoE, 2014).<sup>44</sup> This expansion, mainly at the primary level, has been supported by foreign donor funds, with the United States featuring as a prominent actor. The contradictions inherent in some of the new policies, influenced by prevailing neoliberal agendas, and the disjuncture between rhetoric and practice have been met with criticism (Dahlström & Lemma, 2008; Hussein, 2003, 2005; Negash, 2006; Tessema, 2006). Quality of teaching has deteriorated and class sizes are often large, leading some to characterize the current period as one of uncontrolled expansions (Negash, 2006).

### **Secondary Education**

While the quality of primary education remains poor (see McCormac, 2012) and survival rates are below 56%,<sup>45</sup> the social demand for secondary schooling has been growing rapidly and the numbers of students entering lower secondary are unprecedented. The emphasis on primary schooling since the 1990s, however, has meant limited expansion and public investment at the secondary level (Rose, 2003). As of 2013/14, there were 32,048 government primary schools in Ethiopia and 2,329 secondary schools.<sup>46</sup> The vast majority of these secondary schools (70%) are located in urban areas (MoE, 2014). Nationally, secondary net enrollment rates remain very low at 20.9 for

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<sup>44</sup> The national primary net enrollment rate in 2013/14 was 92.6 and the gross enrollment rate 101.3%. The national gender parity index at the primary level in 2013/14 was 0.93 and in Addis Ababa it was 1.19 (MoE, 2014).

<sup>45</sup> The national survival rate to grade 5 in 2012/13 was 55.5 and has varied between a low of 40 and high of 55.9 over the past 5 years (MoE, 2014). Data on survival rates for higher grades is not available.

<sup>46</sup> 29,878 of the primary schools and 2,000 of the secondary schools are government-run (MoE, 2014). It should be noted that when the current government came to power in the mid-1990s there were 347 secondary schools (Education Statistics Annual Abstracts, cited in Zewdie & Bridges, 2001, p. 18).

lower secondary and 5.5 for upper secondary.<sup>47</sup> NERs are highest in Addis Ababa: 63% for lower secondary and 33.5% for upper secondary. Despite low enrollment, gender parity has been increasing. Using national averages of gross enrollment rates, GPI has reached 0.92 for lower secondary and 0.83 for upper secondary. In an increasing number of secondary schools in Addis Ababa, the number of female students now exceeds boys.<sup>48</sup>

Gender disparities persist, however, in achievement and increase at higher levels of schooling. For example, in 2014 in Addis Ababa, 64% of girls compared to 72% of boys passed the end of primary school (grade 8) examination (MoE, 2014). Nationally at the secondary level, 45% of girls compared to 61% of boys taking the grade 10 general secondary examination scored a passing mark. Only 60% of girls who sat for the grade 12 exam scored 276 or higher—guaranteeing entry into university—compared to 72% of boys. And while fewer girls sat for the exam (45% of all exam takers), they comprised 73% of those who failed (ibid.).

Moreover, advances in female enrollment and education access are uneven across the country and across families in urban areas, occurring in the context of persistent gender norms and biases that disadvantage girls and women. The division of household labor, early marriage and other practices at the household and community level in which women remain valued primarily in terms of the reproductive labor they perform, continue to constrain large numbers of girls and women. This dissertation considers some of these dynamics and their effects for women entering university and beyond but their influence

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<sup>47</sup> Secondary school gross enrollment rates (GER) are almost double NERs; 39 for lower secondary and 10 for upper secondary (MoE, 2014).

<sup>48</sup> Some of these girls come from rural areas to Addis Ababa for secondary schooling, staying with relatives or with other families as domestic workers.

begins much earlier, affecting girls' participation in schooling from the earliest years and compounding as they get older (Poluha, 2004, 2007).

Gendered disadvantages are aggravated by poverty, most frequently documented in terms of rural-urban disparities but also in Addis Ababa and other large urban areas where government schools serve increasingly low-income and marginalized populations (Hailu, 2013, 2015; Negash, 2006; Pells, 2011). Students are often underfed, vulnerable to the high incidence of psychological, physical, sexual and substance abuse in unstable households, with very limited psycho-social and health services to which they can turn (Hailu, 2015). Many students work, as shoe-shiners, street hawkers and domestic servants, and are thus prone to exploitation and harassment in these environments as well, beyond the disadvantages of inadequate time, resources and support for academic study. In this context, concerns over education quality become even more prescient. At the same time as such social problems are deepening, socio-economic disparities widening and the student population expanding, schools are contending with poor learning outcomes at the primary level, limited material resources and an English language policy—with English instruction usually beginning in grade seven—which together make the provision of quality secondary school education (however defined) extremely challenging (Negash, 2006).

### **Higher Education**

Despite the challenges of providing quality secondary schooling, Ethiopian HE has undergone a dramatic expansion since the late 1990s, increasing from two public

universities in 1999 to 22 in 2009 and 34 in 2014.<sup>49</sup> A further 11 public universities are expected to be added by 2020. In 2003/2004, the number of students enrolled in full-time, regular study in public universities in Ethiopia was 56,072 (MoE, 2004) and in 2013/14 it was 308,589 (MoE, 2014). This represents an increase in enrollment of more than 500% in 10 years.<sup>50</sup> This expansion has occurred through merging of existing non-university HEIs, establishment of new universities, and increasing admission capacity of existing universities. There has also been an attendant growth in the private provision of HE, although this has been more contained in recent years.<sup>51</sup> Taking place within the context of broader neoliberal reforms, the government has been hard pressed to ensure that this expansion is accompanied by adequate provision of resources, staffing and quality education, and has been limited in its ability to effectively address social justice concerns (Molla, 2013).

Notwithstanding the expansion in access, Ethiopia still has a low HE gross enrollment rate of 6.3%, with women persistently under-represented (GER for women is 3.6% compared to 8.8% for men) (UIS, 2014). In 2013/14 the percentage of women enrolled in full-time undergraduate study (all years) in public universities was 28%

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<sup>49</sup> This number includes the Ethiopian Civil Service University, Defense University College and Kotebe College of Teachers Education. All 34 MoE owned HEIs offer at least the equivalent of an undergraduate degree (MoE, 2013).

<sup>50</sup> Since 1999/2000, full-time university enrollment has increased more than 1400%. The number of students enrolled full-time in public universities in 1999/2000 was 21,265 (MoE, 2001).

<sup>51</sup> The proportion of students attending private HEIs is still small (7.9% of total full-time undergraduate students) (MoE, 2014). However, it appears that the representation of female students in private HEI institutions is far better than in public ones, as has been observed to be the case in other African countries (Morely & Lussier, 2009). In 2013/14, 54% of students enrolled in full-time undergraduate studies in private HEIs in Ethiopia were women. The reasons for this high female representation are not clear. It may be, in part, because many students who attend private HEIs do so after failing to secure a place in university, usually because of low grades. If this is the primary reason, the larger representation of women students is a cause for concern and raises questions about “whether women are gaining access to core or periphery higher education provision” (Morely, 2011, p.4). There may be other reasons, however, that reflect a less hostile and more flexible learning environment for women. More research is needed in this area to determine if this is the case. The relatively high cost of private institutions, which usually do not provide room and board, does mean that it remains out of the reach of most low-income and rural students.

(MoE, 2014). Most of the larger universities have female enrollment around this national average, some slightly higher and several lower. For example, 23% of full-time undergraduate students in AAU in 2013/14 were women and 18% in Jimma University. The average percentage of women enrolled in master's programs nationally was 20% and in PhD programs 11% for the same year (ibid).

Given that in 2000 women represented only 13% of all full-time undergraduate students enrolled in Ethiopian public universities, HE access for women has more than doubled. However, as Table 1 indicates, this progress has plateaued in recent years. Table 2 shows women's undergraduate enrollment in AAU and shows that there has even been a decline in women's representation in the past six years in this prominent institution.<sup>52</sup>

**Table 1: Female Full-Time Undergraduate Enrollment (all years) in all Public Universities in Ethiopia: 2009-2014**

Year	Total	Female	% Female
2009/10	190,043	49,921	26.3%
2010/11	211,197	54,159	25.6%
2011/12	250,229	66,203	26%
2012/13	294,357	82,301	28%
2013/14	300,244	83,947	28%

Source: MoE, 2014

**Table 2: Female Full-Time Undergraduate Enrollment (all years) in AAU: 2009-2014<sup>53</sup>**

Year	Total	Female	% Female
2009/10	21,819	6,725	31%
2010/11	24,073	7,033	29%
2011/12	22,244	6,186	28%
2012/13	21,656	5,222	24%
2013/14	20,160	4,570	23%

Source: AAU Registrar, 2014

<sup>52</sup> Current enrollment figures for women in public HEIs are also disproportionate to the numbers of females graduating from Grade 12. For example in 2013, 37% of national Grade 12 graduates scoring 276 or higher –passing marks high enough to attend university–were women (MoE, 2013) but female enrollment in Year 1 in AAU that year, for example, was only 24 % (AAU Registrar Office).

<sup>53</sup> Unlike most other universities, total undergraduate enrollments in AAU have been declining over the past 6 years. This may be due to a shift in focus toward post-graduate programs but the representation of women should not be affected by the decline in total numbers.



From a policy perspective, the need to address gender equality in HE, and education in general, is well-established and enshrined in the political, legal and educational policy documents and programs of the Ethiopian government (Molla, 2013).<sup>54</sup> The focus of equity policies has been improving access and key among the strategies has been the provision of differential admission advantage for “disadvantaged groups,” including women (Higher Education Proclamation, no. 650/20009). Affirmative action for women at the undergraduate level stipulates that women may be admitted with a GPA 0.2 points lower than that required of men. This allows for more women to be eligible for university, particularly as females are over-represented among secondary school graduates with low pass marks (MoE, 2014). This represents, however, only a very small grade difference that is often outweighed by the associated bias and misrecognition experienced by women in Ethiopian HEIs, which I will discuss later. A set of additional interventions have also been recommended by the MoE which include the establishment of a Gender Office in public universities tasked with promoting gender equality within the institution, including support of female students through tutorial programs, assertiveness training and guidance and counseling services for female students (MoE, 2004).<sup>55</sup> However, two decades since the introduction of such equity policies and strategies, inequality in women’s access to and success in HE remains a challenge.

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<sup>54</sup> According to Molla’s insightful review (2013), two landmark policy documents were instrumental in introducing major equity-related strategies in HEIs in Ethiopia: the Higher Education Proclamation (FDRE, 2009) and the Five-Year Strategic Framework for Enhancing Women’s Participation in Tertiary Education in Ethiopia, 2004-2009 (MoE, 2004).

<sup>55</sup> See Chapter 7 for more discussion of the Gender Office, particularly at AAU.

Beyond access, attrition rates in Ethiopian HEIs are very high for students in general and for women in particular. The percentage of women graduating with an undergraduate degree from public universities—21% in 2013/14—remains consistently lower than the female enrollment rate (MOE, 2014).<sup>56</sup> Beyond this figure, however, national and university-level data on attrition is not readily available or consistently reported. According to statistics acquired from the AAU Registrar Office, women are over-represented among students who are academically dismissed, accounting for 34% of dismissals after the first semester of 2013/2014 while their representation in enrollments for the same year was 23%. In some years the disparity is even higher, for example in 2010/11 women accounted for 46% of academic dismissals in AAU while comprising 29% of enrollments. Over the past 7 years, the percentage of female students (all years) dismissed from undergraduate study in AAU after the first semester has been at least double that of men.<sup>57</sup> Much higher figures are reported by studies conducted in other universities, although these are from earlier years.<sup>58</sup> Such data is not published in national reports and has to be obtained from each university. Universities often do not collect such data by year of study, so that while it can be expected that the first year of study is particularly challenging for students and may result in high attrition it is difficult to monitor such trends with existing data.

According to statistics obtained from the AAU registrar office, and confirmed by interviews conducted in this study, the majority of students leave university for the

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<sup>56</sup> Graduation rates for women in post-graduate degree programs are worse. In 2012/13 only 14.5% of those awarded a Masters degree were women (MoE, 2013b).

<sup>57</sup> For women, academic dismissal has ranged each year between 9% and 4%, while for men it has ranged between 4% and 1%.

<sup>58</sup> For example, the total dismissal rate for full-time female undergraduate students in Debub University in 2004/5 was 35% according to Semela (2007) and more than 70% for female students enrolled in the College of Education in Jimma University in 2006/7 according to Melese and Fenta (2009). This was when a bachelor's of education was still offered as a three year undergraduate program.

ostensive reason of having scored a failing GPA (academic dismissal) but the factors contributing to poor academic engagement and performance are rarely examined by the university or MoE. Existing HE studies across countries (see review in Morley, 2011) suggest that it is women from low-income households and rural areas—characteristics describing the majority of women now entering teaching (see Chapter 7)—who are most likely to experience clusters of disadvantage leading to dismissal and withdrawal from university. Existing statistical indicators, however, are insufficiently disaggregated and are inadequate on their own to allow for a nuanced examination of such intersections.

Under-representation of female academic staff and hostile work environments in HEIs for women, while not a focus of this study, are also persistent problems. In 2013/14, women comprised only 10.8% of all Ethiopian academic staff in government HEIs (MoE, 2014).<sup>59</sup> Even in AAU, the oldest and most prominent HEI in Ethiopia, most female academic staff do not hold PhDs and are concentrated in the lower academic ranks (ibid). They consequently have lower incomes than their male colleagues whose higher qualifications and positions better situate them to attract research funds, consultancies and other benefits. Women are similarly underrepresented in the highest levels of administration; only one woman in Ethiopia has served as a university vice-president and the first female university president was appointed in 2014 (interview with Gender Office Director, AAU).

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<sup>59</sup> In 2013/14, only 8% of Ethiopian academic staff holding a master's degree were women and of those with a Ph.D. degree only 7% were women (MoE, 2014).

## Teacher Education

Teacher education in general and for secondary school teachers in particular has undergone several reforms since the late 1990s in Ethiopia (Tessema, 2007).<sup>60</sup> It was one of the five priority areas identified for ensuring equity and quality in the education system when the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy was established in 1994 (MoE, 1994). With the formulation of the Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) in 2002, more systemic changes were attempted. Despite over a decade of reforms, improving quality of teaching and student outcomes, attracting interested and high-achieving candidates and increasing female representation remained a challenge (MoE, 2009).<sup>61</sup> For example, TESO acknowledged the need for greater female representation in teaching but did not introduce clear cut procedures to address equity in selection of teacher candidates (MoE, 2011a).

Dissatisfaction with the outcomes of TESO led to the introduction in 2011 of a new modality of secondary teacher education and a new set of selection guidelines aiming to increase female representation in secondary teaching to 40% by 2020 (MoE,

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<sup>60</sup> With respect to the earlier history of teacher education in Ethiopia, a teacher training system for primary schools was initiated in the late 1940s. It was not until 1962, however, with the opening of the Faculty of Education at Addis Ababa University that systematic training of teachers at the secondary school level was started, and in 1970, an additional teacher training college (later known as Kotebe College of Teacher Education) became operational (Wagaw, 1979).

<sup>61</sup> Moreover, according to Tessema (2006), “obsession with ‘system overhaul’ and reform has caused widespread contradictions and a serious disconnect between rhetoric and practice. The reforms, according to Tessema and others (Dahlström & Lemma, 2008; Hussein, 2006) have created “deskilling, deprofessionalization, and dehumanization”; they have been top-down in spite of their participatory discourse; and follow a standardization model that ignores local knowledge, diversity and social justice in spite of the rhetoric of educational equity. These authors attribute current trends, following Amin (2004), Tabulawa (2003) and Tickly (2004), to the growing influence of neoliberalism. A prime example of the “deskilling” involved in reforms of this era is the introduction of the “plasma TV.” In October 2004, Ethiopian secondary school students began following their lessons via satellite dish. The program (commonly known as education by plasma) is beamed from South Africa for the bulk of each class time; 491 secondary schools in the country were equipped with a television (plasma) screen. Both popular and professional criticism of this program has been so great that it has come under review and many secondary schools have abandoned it (AAU faculty and school director interviews).

2011a). Previously, a three-year Bachelor's of Education was offered in most public universities through which secondary school teachers were trained. This degree is no longer offered. Instead, prospective secondary school teachers are now expected to complete an undergraduate degree in another field and then a one (academic) year Post-Graduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT).<sup>62</sup> In large part, the PGDT was adopted in an effort to recruit better candidates (who had at least survived undergraduate studies) and to counter the trend that those with the lowest secondary school examination results enter teacher education programs (MoE, 2009). University graduates are now being trained as teachers but deterioration in the quality of HE in recent years and the difficulty of developing a strong and positive teacher identity through the PGDT program (to be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7) raise doubts as to whether the program is producing better and more committed teachers as intended. Moreover, as Chapter 7 will also reveal, the intended aim of allowing for greater practical experience in schools over the course of the post-graduate diploma (MoE, 2011b) is not being successfully met at this time, at least not in Addis Ababa University. To date, no systematic evaluation of the PGDT program or comparative analysis of this modality to the previous integrated program have been conducted, despite ongoing and heated debates among the faculty as to which modality is better for departments of education (which have lost some of their vitality in no longer serving undergraduate students) and for the teaching profession.

Transition from the system under TESO to the PGDT program in 2011 began with summer offerings. The summer PGDT program is commonly referred to as the “in-

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<sup>62</sup> Primary schools teachers are trained in separate Colleges of Teachers Education (CTEs) and not in the main public universities. Prospective primary school teachers are accepted into CTE programs after graduation from Grade 10 and then complete the equivalent of three years of full-time teacher education (MoE, 2014).

out-in” modality in which trainees enter for one summer of teacher training after completing a Bachelor’s degree, teach the following academic year while completing one or two more courses and then return for another full-time summer of teacher education classes. In 2013/14, a full-time offering of the PGDT program during the regular academic year was offered as had originally been intended. This decision by the MoE came somewhat abruptly as it was unclear right up to a couple of months before the start of the academic year when implementation would begin (AAU faculty interviews). Despite initial challenges, the regular, full-time PGDT offering is intended to be the mode of training for the majority of new entrants into secondary school teaching.

In its first year in 2013/14 the full-time PGDT program was offered in nine universities. Data was not readily available at the time of writing for each of these programs but in AAU, 340 students were enrolled in the program, the vast majority of whom had graduated with a Bachelor’s degree within the previous two years and were in their early to mid-twenties (AAU Registrar Office).<sup>63</sup> Although current selection guidelines call for 40% of admissions to the PGDT program to be reserved for women, this quota was not reached in any of the regions (MoE staff interview). Only 27.6% of the student enrolled in the AAU PGDT (94 of 340) were women. According to interviews with staff in the MoE’s Directorate for Teacher and Educational Leaders Professional Development, which oversees the PGDT program, this figure is comparable to that of

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<sup>63</sup> See Chapter 5 (Methodology) and Chapter 7 (PGDT experiences) for further details about PGDT program, including its organization and the background of students.

other programs, with some falling lower.<sup>64</sup> Apart from the 40% quota, the same entry requirements exist for women and men.<sup>65</sup>

While the MOE's 2010 National Girl's Education Strategy recognizes the potential role of women teachers in supporting girls' education and the importance of their equal participation in its own right, this participation is defined primarily in terms of representation (p. 14), sought, as already noted, through affirmative action for admission into undergraduate studies and the quota for teacher education. Beyond entry into teacher education, policies are largely silent on women teachers.

### **Teaching Profession**

A carefully researched history of the teaching profession in Ethiopia has yet to be written, leaving researchers in this area to patch together piecemeal information from disparate sources. As of 1972, more than half of secondary school teachers were expatriates, comprising "a teaching corps," in the words of Negash (1996), "whose commitment to long-term national interests was indeed marginal." Subsequent years saw large-scale efforts to indigenize the teaching work force. A system of national service that placed some of the best and brightest of university graduates around the country as teachers during the Dergue regime extended the view of teachers as highly educated, intelligent and progressive but that subsequently changed for a host of reasons that scholars have as yet not systematically researched. Among the reasons cited are the hiring

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<sup>64</sup> In Haramaya University, for example, 305 students were accepted into the PGDT program, 59 (20%) of whom were women (Kassa, 2014).

<sup>65</sup> Entry into the PGDT program currently requires a minimum cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of 2.00 for undergraduate degree, an average score of 50% or above in grades 9-12 for all subjects and an average score of 55% or above in the chosen teaching subject. Candidates also have to score 50% or higher in the PGDT entrance exam which comprises mostly of English, mathematics and civic education components. Data was not available on the pass rates for women and men applying to the PGDT program.

of teachers without proper qualifications to meet growing demand, the lowering of the quality of secondary schooling and, thus, of candidates entering the profession, stagnant pay far outpaced by the cost of living, limited opportunities for career advancement and tight political control of teachers and educational leadership in different ways over recent decades (MoE, 2009; Negash, 1996, 2006; Tesfaye, 2003; Wagaw, 1979).

There are likely many factors contributing to the general decline of the status of teaching in Ethiopia, which is an experience shared in many other African countries (Mulkeen, 2007; Obanya, 2010). Whatever the combination of factors, commentators mark the current period as the low point of a steady decline. Tesfaye (2003) notes some of the cultural expressions reflecting this low status, such as the vanishing of popular wedding songs that lauded the good fortune of a bride to be marrying a groom who is a teacher.<sup>66</sup> Such songs were amongst the most favored but have long disappeared from any contemporary wedding track. Another indication of decline noted in the literature is the general lack of interest by students to enter teaching. Over 61% of the senior teacher education students surveyed by Eshete (2003) indicated that they were not happy to be trained as teachers, with no significant difference in opinion observed between women and men. A survey of 138 first-year students in the education faculty in one of the major universities in Ethiopia (Tesfay & Demewez, 2001, cited in Tesfaye, 2003), revealed that only 23% were willing to take up a teaching position while the remainder hoped to leave before or after graduation. A 2009 national study of in-service teachers conducted by VSO entitled “How Much is a Good Teacher Worth?” reported a “virtually unanimous

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<sup>66</sup> Note that it is always the groom who is a teacher. These songs are also mentioned in the VSO 2009 study.



view among those surveyed” of a profession that is undervalued and in which the majority of teachers would change their occupation if they could (2009, p. 18).

For secondary school teachers in urban areas, teaching is, thus, an occupation that requires four years of post-secondary education but does not guarantee a subsistence wage or respect (see Chapter 8 for further discussion). At the same time, government employment in general has contracted significantly in recent years (Mains, 2012) while private sector employment has not kept pace with the numbers of qualified university graduates resulting in high rates of unemployment among this group (UNDP, 2015).<sup>67</sup>

It is in this context that women are entering and being encouraged to enter the teaching profession in increasing numbers. Their representation in secondary teaching, however, remains far below that of men. Table 3 shows the percentage of women teaching in public secondary schools in 2013/14 by region, with a national average of 15.7%. Worthy of note is that Addis Ababa, the largest urban region, has a similar representation of women (16.5%) as the rest of the country. According to the MoE, 90.9% of all women secondary school teachers are certified and have an undergraduate degree (MoE, 2014).<sup>68</sup>

**Table 3: Total Number of Secondary School Teachers (Grades 9-12) in Ethiopia by Region and Sex, 2013/14**

Region	Male	Female	%Female	Total
Afar	229	36	13.6%	265
Harari	260	48	15.6%	308
Dire Dawa	534	81	13.2%	615
Gambella	644	95	12.6%	739

<sup>67</sup> Ethiopia’s National Human Development Report cites youth (ages 15-29) urban unemployment at 23.3% in 2012/13.

<sup>68</sup> The percentage of certified male secondary teachers is 92.6% (MoE, 2014).

Ben. Gumuz	1136	109	8.8%	1245
Somali	1118	157	12.3%	1275
Tigray	2499	670	21.1%	3169
<b>Addis Ababa</b>	6183	1218	<b>16.5%</b>	7401
SNNP	11614	1922	14.2%	13536
Amhara	15089	3510	14.7%	23835
Oromiya	20534	3301	14%	23835
<b>Total</b>	59840	11147	<b>15.7%</b>	70987

Source: MoE, 2014.

Women's under-representation is even greater in school leadership, as is the case around the world. In 2013/14, only 11% of all directors in Addis Ababa secondary schools (14 out of 110) and 10 % of all vice-directors (15 out of 136) were women (EMIS, 2014).<sup>6970</sup> Apart from provisions for maternity leave, policies concerning in-service teachers are, as a matter of principle, gender-neutral and belie the general view that women and men's experiences are the same (MoE staff interviews, see Chapter 9).

Reliable statistics on teacher retention (sex disaggregated or otherwise) are not currently available.<sup>71</sup> The rate of attrition for women secondary school teachers during 2013/14 was reported to be slightly higher than men in Addis Ababa and almost equal to men nationally (EMIS, 2014). This data also suggests that the percentage of secondary school teachers leaving government school teaching in Addis Ababa during 2013/14 was around 5%, which is considerably lower than what school administrators, MoE staff and teachers interviewed for this study indicated. My estimation is that these figures are not

<sup>69</sup> All data cited as EMIS (2014) was provided by a contact working in that division in response to specific queries submitted by me.

<sup>70</sup> In Oromiya region, where the largest number of teachers and principals are employed, only 5 out of 658 secondary school directors (less than 1%) were women and only 24 out of 623 vice directors (4%) were women (EMIS, 2014).

<sup>71</sup> The MoE had just begun to collect such data nationally when this study was conducted.

reliable (and are, therefore, not emphasized here) but they do point to the complex and gendered dynamics behind representation and attrition which this study opens up (see Chapters 8 and 9).

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the broad contours of the education landscape in Ethiopia. It has noted the rapid expansion at all levels, albeit somewhat lagging at the secondary level, and the growing challenges of addressing quality and equity concerns. Secondary schooling still remains a largely urban phenomenon and while gender parity among students at this level is increasing, the representation of women in teaching and leadership remain very low. The rate of increase in women's enrollment in HE has also stagnated in recent years. Overall, the commitment of the government to gender equality has been articulated in many policies but remains narrowly focused on questions of access. With respect to teaching, there have been several years of reform in teacher education, often in rapid succession, without adequate evaluation to determine results, coupled with a decline in the status and conditions of the profession. This backdrop is crucial to the examination of women's experiences—once they enter university, teacher training and full-time teaching—that is the focus of this study.

## Chapter 5: Methodology

*The “voice” we hear when we read about teachers in Africa rarely belongs to the teacher. . . . (Buckler, 2011, p. 249).*

*“Know that the human meaning of public issues must be revealed by relating them to personal troubles—and to the problems of the individual life. Know that the problems of social science, when adequately formulated, must include both troubles and issues, both biography and history, and the range of their intricate relations. Within that range the life of the individual and the making of societies occur; and within that range the sociological imagination has its chance to make a difference in the quality of human life in our time.” (C.W. Mills, 1959, p. 226).*

### **Framing the Research**

This study is informed by the aims of sociological research alluded to above: to give voice to the perspectives of women teachers and to foreground “the problems of the individual life” so as to be able to better the quality of life for more people. Underpinning its methodological approach is an interpretative and feminist epistemology situated within a qualitative paradigm (Creswell, 2008; Denson and Lincoln, 2005; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

### **Qualitative Research Paradigm**

Qualitative approaches seek to “center attention on human elements” (Knowles, 1992, p. 113) and help researchers to understand what makes our world meaningful for people through interaction, empathy and interpretation (Brockington and Sullivan, 2003, p. 72). This complements the equally valuable data and analysis that can emerge from large-scale quantitative studies, such as those contributing to knowledge about education systems and teachers in Africa (e.g., the UNESCO Global Monitoring Reports and various government studies). The latter, however, have tended to dominate in the African context

(Buckler, 2011; Mulkeen, 2008). Furthermore, quantitative studies on teachers have often failed to give adequate attention to differences between men and women (see for example, Acheampong & Lewis, 2002 and Mulkeen, 2007), and the methods employed are poorly suited to examining the aspirations, strategies, motivations, and meaning-making of individuals.

Buckler (2011) contends that statistical data alone are insufficient for developing flexible policies that meet the needs of diverse teachers across a range of environments. Barrett, citing Ball & Godson (1985), argues for the need to “[open] up the sealed boxes within which teachers work and survive” (2006, p.13) and to expand the toolkit of education research in the African context. And Fennell and Arnot stress the need for qualitative “voice research” that “urges policy makers to move from the study of (statistical) gender gaps in education, beyond access questions (although not neglecting these) to a study of the social construction of gender inequality and gender dynamics at local levels” (2008, p. 7). This study, thus, aims to address some of the methodological inadequacies in the existing knowledge-base about women secondary school teachers in urban Africa by drawing on the strengths of feminist and ethnographic approaches to research which fall within a qualitative paradigm.

### **Ethnographic Approach**

At the core of ethnography is “concern with the meanings of actions and events to the people we seek to understand” (Spradley, 1975, p. 5). It yields “thick description” toward a more nuanced understanding of context and can bring to the attention of cultural outsiders (including those in the ministry of education and international actors) how

educational processes are situated in and influenced by the broader social context (Crossley & Vulliamy, 1997).

Walford (2003) suggests seven core elements of ethnography: (1) a focus on the study of culture; (2) the use of multiple methods and constructions of diverse forms of data; (3) direct involvement and long-term engagement; (4) recognition that the researcher is the main research instrument; (5) emphasis on the accounts of participants and their understandings (6) engagement in an iterative process of hypothesis and theory building; and (7) focus on a particular case (summarized in Buckler, 2012).

This study included these elements in the following ways: I began with very open questions seeking to understand the context and meaning-making (core elements of culture) related to women teachers' lives (1). I conducted semi-structured and informal interviews, field observations and participant shadowing, which involved ongoing and direct engagement with a diversity of participants, and multiple visits to different sites over a period of 15 months of fieldwork (2, 3 and 4).<sup>72</sup> The extended contact with participants and the range of methods used provided opportunity to collect rich and detailed data to achieve the goal of thick description and descriptive analysis. Throughout data collection and analysis, the accounts of participants and their understanding, particularly those of women teachers, were given prominence (5). I inductively developed understandings of and questions about how women experienced the environments being examined and engaged in analysis between phases of data collection and after fieldwork was completed (6). The focus of the study was on the experiences of pre- and in-service women teachers in Addis Ababa (7).

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<sup>72</sup> See the section at the end of this chapter on the role of the research and reflexivity for more details related to point (4) of Walford's list.

Importantly, the use of an ethnographic approach supported and was coherent with the adoption of the capability approach, as the conceptual framework for this study, at the stage of data analysis.<sup>73</sup> The amount, quality and nature of the data collected through the use of ethnographic methods, and the theoretically-open and inductive approach encouraged in ethnography, made possible and facilitated adoption of the capability approach at this stage. This study, thus, fits neatly with one of the three empirical uses of the capability approach identified by Robeyns (2006), in which the epistemological goal is descriptive analysis and thick description, the methodology is qualitative, and functionings and capabilities emerge as elements of a narrative.<sup>74</sup>

### **Feminist Approach**

This study was also informed by elements of feminist epistemology and methodology. A key strength of qualitative feminist research, fully congruent with the use of an ethnographic approach, is in revealing how women make meaning of their social world, how that meaning informs their actions, and the recursive relationship with social structure (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). In this respect, this study sought to map how “gender, women and knowledge have been constructed” in the lives of teachers (Oakley, 2000, p. 4) and how these constructions affect what women teachers value, what they perceive as constraints, and how they are able to respond to constraints in pursuing valued goals.

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<sup>73</sup> The value of using the capability approach fully emerged at the stage of data analysis and as such did not shape the research design or data collection.

<sup>74</sup> The other two epistemological uses of the capability approach identified by Robeyns (2006) is welfare/quality of life measurement (using a quantitative empirical methodology and capabilities/functionings as social indicators) and normative theories (using a philosophical methodology and capabilities/functionings as part of the philosophical foundations).

Feminist standpoint epistemology is an approach that has been particularly influential and is relevant to the study of the experiences of women teachers. This approach places women at the center of the research process, taking their concrete, everyday experiences as the starting point from which to build knowledge (Brooks, 2007). Researchers working in this tradition have argued that women, as members of an oppressed group, have developed a heightened awareness not only of their own lives but of the lives of dominant groups as well, possessing a kind of “working, active consciousness” of both perspectives (Collins, 1990, p. 19). Such a consciousness may be put to work in different ways, to conform, ensure survival or resist (hooks, 2004), which opens up a rich space to consider questions of structure and agency.

The position taken in this study is that in some research contexts, such as where women teachers are trained and work within similar institutions and are increasingly from similar socio-economic backgrounds, there will be much shared experience and a common standpoint may be discerned. At the same time, it is recognized that differences among women exist and should be explored rather than “explained away” (Brooks, 2007).<sup>75</sup> The strength of in-depth, nuanced qualitative data, in this regard, is that it can shed light on the intersection of inequalities (Collins, 1990) in the lives of individuals as well as help in understanding which particular mechanisms at particular times and in specific contexts are generative of gender inequality (Risman, 2004). Counter-examples and different or divergent experiences are used in this study as rich sources to further develop and deepen theoretical insights, and a diversity of participants are included in the

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<sup>75</sup> In this context, feminists of color have since the 1980s systematically pushed researchers to ask the question “which women?” and “whose experiences?” (Anzaldua, 1987; Collins, 1990; hooks, 1984; Mohanty, 1988). This interrogation of universals, carried forward by post-modern and post-structuralist theorists, has illuminated the complex interlinkages between race, class and gender (what Collins terms the ‘matrix of domination’).



research (e.g., those with no family commitment and those with child-care responsibilities, those raised in Addis Ababa and those with a rural upbringing).

This study, thus, contributes to a small but growing and very rich body of research (e.g., Barrett, 2006; Buckler, 2011, 2014; Dunne, 2007; Molyneaux, 2011; Stambach, 2000; Tao, 2012, 2015; Vavrus, 2002) employing ethnographic and feminist approaches to uncover the stories of women teachers, the conditions of their lives and work, and the ways that gender shapes their experiences, aspirations and actions in African contexts.

### **Overview of Research Design**

This study was more complex than a single-sited ethnography because its objective was to understand the experiences of individuals (specifically women) undertaking a process (becoming and then beginning work as secondary school teachers) that occurs in different sites and in relation to different institutions. Research was, thus, conducted with respect to three distinct stages: undergraduate study, teacher training through the PGDT program, and early years of teaching<sup>76</sup> through fieldwork in Addis Ababa over the course of 15 months from February 2014 to May 2015. February to June 2014 were spent collecting data for the first two stages. The remaining nine months involved data collection for the third stage and supplemental data collection for the first two. A total of 47 individuals across different sites, primarily two AAU campuses and 14 schools around the city, were interviewed for this study, several of them more than once.<sup>77</sup> Data from field observations, shadowing of teachers and numerous informal

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<sup>76</sup> A similar model, attending to both pre- and in-service experiences, was earlier used by Stromquist et al. (2012) in a study of women primary school teachers in Liberia.

<sup>77</sup> 4 female AAU undergraduate students, 12 female full-time PGDT students, 15 in-service teachers (12 women, 3 men, not including the four PGDT students interviewed again when in-service), 6 CoE&BS faculty members (4 men, 2 women, including one serving as a gender coordinator), 3 Gender Office staff (1

conversations across sites were also collected and analyzed. In order to make clear the data sources used, a description of the research sites and participants for each of the three stages, including the rationale and process of selection, is provided below.

### **Data Sources**

#### **Undergraduate University Stage**

##### ***Research site(s):***

The research site for this stage was Addis Ababa University, where I spent a total of 14 weeks from February to June, 2014. All the faculty, Gender Office staff and undergraduate students interviewed and the observations conducted were at the Sidist Kilo (Humanities and Social Science) and Arat Kilo (Science) AAU campuses. The PGDT students who were interviewed for this stage (see next section) were enrolled in the AAU program but had recently graduated from undergraduate studies at a total of ten public universities across the country (Table 4).<sup>78</sup> Interviewing these PGDT students was a strategic way to garner data about their recent undergraduate experiences at different universities without the prohibitive cost, time investment and challenge of gaining access to multiple institutions.<sup>79</sup>

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woman, 2 men), 3 school directors, 1 guidance counsellor and 3 MoE personnel (all men). The 19 in-service teachers interviewed worked in 14 schools in Addis Ababa, six of which were visited on one or more occasions.

<sup>78</sup> In 2014, Ethiopia had a total of 34 public universities.

<sup>79</sup> See the section below and section on “Limitations” in this chapter for further discussion of the advantages and disadvantages to this approach.

**Table 4: Research Participants' Undergraduate University and Female Representation at Each University**

University attended (Total 10)	No. of participants (Total 16; 12 recent graduates (PGDT students) and 4 current undergrads)	% regular undergraduate female enrollment at this university (2012/13)*
Ambo University	1	25%
AAU (Sidist Kilo & Arat Kilo campuses)	6 (including 4 current undergrads)	24%
Bahir Dar University	1	29%
Debre Markos University	1	27%
Dilla University	2	29%
Meda Welabu University	1	27%
Mekele University	1	29%
Mizan-Tepi University	1	33%
Gondar University	1	32%
Wolaita Sodo University	1	29%

\*Source: Moe, 2013

Of these ten universities, five (Debre Markos, Dilla, Meda Welabu, Mizan-Tepi, and Wolaita Sodo universities) were established within the last ten years and are more remote and isolated campuses. AAU, at the other end of the spectrum, is situated in the capital and was created as the first public university in the country in 1950.<sup>80</sup> Women are under-represented at all these universities (See Table 4 above). Despite its low female representation (24% in 2012/13), AAU can be considered a best-case scenario in terms of institutional conditions and opportunities available to women, the sensitivity and training of faculty with respect to gender and equity issues generally, and the political and public attention on this institution (Tsegaye, 2014).<sup>81</sup> For instance, it is reasonable to expect that the Gender Office at AAU, which is the first to have been established and has access to

<sup>80</sup> Originally called the University College of Addis Ababa at its establishment in 1950, it was later renamed Haile Selassie I University in 1962 after the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I. The institution received its current name in 1975 (Tsegaye, 2014).

<sup>81</sup> In a March 2014 address, Dr. Yosef Mekonnen, Director of AAU's Office of the President stated that: "AAU has always placed the gender issue at the center of its strategic plan and worked hard to contribute its share, as a pioneer institution of higher learning in the country, to the advancement of women's equality and rights. This unwavering stand has been at the heart of its educational philosophy. AAU occupies the foremost position in the history of the struggle for the introduction and realization of democracy in the country." (Tsegaye, 2014)

many resources in being in the capital city, would be among the most functional and proactive. To identify the challenges that this office faces is, thus, revealing of the even greater constraints faced on campuses elsewhere in the country.

### ***Research participants***

**Description:** The data for the undergraduate university stage comes primarily from in-depth interviews with twelve female students enrolled in the 2013/14 full-time PGDT program at AAU. Eleven of these participants graduated in 2013 (less than a year prior to interviews) and one in 2011, with Bachelor degrees from public universities around the country (Table 4). All were between the ages of 20 and 25 when they graduated and none were married or had children during their undergraduate studies. Table 5 shows in what subjects the twelve female participants graduated.

**Table 5: Undergraduate Subjects of 12 Female PGDT Students Interviewed**

<b>Subject studied</b>	<b>No. of participants (Total 12)</b>
Biology	3
Chemistry	2
English	1
Ethiopian Language and Literature (Amharic)	1
Geography	2
Mathematics	2
Physics	1

Of these twelve participants, seven grew up in rural areas or small towns outside of Addis Ababa. Five went to high school and lived (most with family) in Addis Ababa. The four largest ethnicities in Ethiopia (Oromo, Amhara, Tigray and Gurage) were each represented by at least two participants, as were those from Muslim and Christian (Orthodox and other denominations) religions. None came from families that could be

characterized as more than lower middle class and all attended government secondary schools.

Also included in the data analyzed for this stage are interviews with two undergraduate female students enrolled at AAU in 2014 who were participating in the retention program offered by the Gender Office for female students with poor academic performance (i.e., those who came close to failing the previous semester) and interviews with two AAU undergraduate Law students who were active participants in the AAU Yellow Movement, a student-led movement advocating for change in gender norms and relations on campus and in the wider society (see Chapter 6 for more details).

Interviews were also conducted with four representatives of the AAU Gender Office. This included the director (female) and a senior staff member (male) in the central office, as well as the Gender Office coordinator (female) in the CoE&BS. The latter also served as a full-time faculty member and was at the end of the 2013/2014 academic year appointed as vice-dean of the college, causing her to leave her role as gender coordinator. She was replaced by a “gender expert” (male) whom I also interviewed.

Finally, interviews were conducted with six CoE&BS faculty members (four male and two female, including the one serving as Gender Office coordinator). Although all the faculty interviewed were from this one college, they were from different subject fields (mathematics, geography, etc.) and had taught undergraduate classes in the College and elsewhere.

**Selection and recruitment:** One advantage of relying on PGDT student accounts of their undergraduate experiences was that it was more fully representative of experiences at public universities across the country than if only undergraduate students

from one university were interviewed. It also afforded me the opportunity to learn about the undergraduate experiences of the exact population of interest to this study (i.e., young women, largely from low-income families who enter teaching) who would otherwise not have been possible to identify given the elimination of the Bachelor of Education program.

The 12 female PGDT students interviewed were selected through purposeful sampling. With permission of the lecturer, I attended seven different PGDT classes and briefly introduced myself and the research to the students. I passed round a sign-up sheet asking whoever was willing to speak with me to provide their name and contact details and basic information about their field of study and undergraduate university. I expressed that I was particularly interested in speaking with women but allowed whoever was interested to sign up and also informed students that I would not be able to conduct formal interviews with everyone but would be on campus several days a week and would be happy to talk with whoever was interested. This resulted in an enthusiastic response from most students and was aided by the fact that people share their cell phone numbers very freely with each other in Ethiopia. I was able from these lists to then set up interview appointments with women who graduated in different subject fields and from different undergraduate universities, as well as have informal conversations with many others, including male students.

The same approach was taken in identifying the two retention students, having gained permission from the Gender Office to sit in on two classes offered through that program. The two AAU undergraduate Law students who were active in the Yellow Movement were identified and approached through a Gender Office staff member.

As the central Gender Office at AAU is small, I simply approached the director and the senior program expert who had served there the longest, both of whom agreed to be interviewed. Faculty members in the CoE&BS were selected through snowball sampling and included the only two women faculty teaching at the time. Sampling was purposeful in that I selected faculty who taught a variety of subjects and had different levels of seniority and years of experience.

### **Teacher Education (PGDT) Stage**

#### ***Research sites***

The main site for the research on this stage was AAU's CoE&BS. AAU was one of nine universities that offered the PGDT program in 2013/14, the first year the MoE requested that it be offered as a regular, full-time program.<sup>82</sup> The AAU PGDT program is typical of other programs in that student admission, the structure of the program and its content are determined by the MoE (MoE, 2009). According to the MoE staff interviewed, the representation of women and demographic characteristics (including socio-economic background) of the pre-service teachers in the AAU PGDT program was also representative of other programs. AAU may be exceptional, however, with regard to its faculty's high qualifications (many PhD holders from universities abroad) and experience (several years of school and university teaching, as well as supervision of student-teachers). There is also a large concentration of secondary schools in the city, several of which have established relationships with the university. In this sense, AAU

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<sup>82</sup> As earlier noted, pre-service teachers enrolled in the program are graduates from universities around the country. Most register for the program as residents of Addis Ababa and are assigned by lottery to a sub-city (one of ten administrative zones in Addis Ababa) and then to an open teaching post in a school within that sub-city. A small group of PGDT students are deployed to teach in the surrounding areas of Addis Ababa in the Oromia region (e.g., Fiche).

represents a best-case scenario for teacher education as it does for undergraduate study. At the same time, Addis Ababa may attract more pre-service teachers interested in opportunities to further their studies and eventually find alternative employment, as well as benefit from the amenities of a big city. According to accounts of faculty and MoE staff, however, this is also true of other urban universities and teaching posts so that the general dynamics described in this study, even if different in degree, can be expected to be similar to urban areas elsewhere in the country.

Additional research sites for this stage were the four secondary schools in which I observed PGDT students teach their practicum classes (all grade nine classes; two biology, one geography and one mathematics). Two of these public schools were within walking distance of the AAU campuses and the other two further out. All served largely low-income students as most public schools in Addis Ababa do. Two of the schools were identified as model schools in the region with some of the highest student examination results and pass rates. The other two were average schools with not much to distinguish them from others in the city.

### *Research participants*

**Description:** The same 12 female PGDT students who were interviewed about their undergraduate experiences were also interviewed in depth about their teacher education experience. All were between the ages of 21 and 26 at the time. The subjects in which they were training to be teachers (generally the same as that in which they graduated with a bachelor's degree) were: Amharic (1), Biology (3), Chemistry (2), Geography (2), Mathematics (2), Physics (1), English (1)). Three of the women were



married and two had young children. Seven of these participants lived in campus dormitories and five off-campus with relatives during the PGDT program.<sup>83</sup>

The same six AAU CoE&BS faculty, four men and two women, who were interviewed about undergraduate teaching were also interviewed in depth about their experience as teacher educators and with the PGDT program. These were faculty trained in different subject fields as well as education, with experience in HE ranging from five to over twenty-five years. All but two had previously worked as secondary school teachers and all supervised student-teachers in schools. Most had also conducted, or were currently involved in, education research around the country. The coordinator of the PGDT program at the time, and two other faculty (one male, one female) became key informants with whom I had ongoing conversations beyond formal interviews. One of the vice-deans of the college also served as my institutional liaison as a Fulbright student researcher and was instrumental in facilitating access to faculty, MoE staff, the CoE&BS registrar's office and secondary schools.

In addition, I interviewed two staff members in the MoE's Directorate for Teacher and Educational Leaders Professional Development, and the director of the Addis Ababa Bureau of Education. All three men had worked for ten years or more in the MoE and were very familiar with the PGDT program, teacher policies and conditions in schools.

**Selection and recruitment:** The process by which the PGDT students and faculty were recruited was described above as these were the same participants interviewed about undergraduate student experiences. It should be noted that in addition to purposeful sampling for graduates of different universities and across subject fields, special effort

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<sup>83</sup> The focus of the study was on the regular, full-time PGDT program (no the summer offering) as at the time of research the MoE had indicated that the regular program would be the main pathway for entry into secondary teaching.

was made to identify student-teachers who were married and had children and to ensure that different religions and ethnicities, as well as those living on and off campus, were represented. I was also interested in ensuring representation of the full range of attitudes towards teaching and career plans, which proved possible without requiring another process of selection. The three MoE staff interviewed were identified and access established through referral by faculty members who had worked with them in the past and knew them to have relevant knowledge.

### **Early Career in Secondary School Teaching Stage**

#### ***Research sites***

The teachers interviewed for this stage were from 14 government schools (3 primary, 11 secondary) in seven of the ten sub-cities (administrative zones) in Addis Ababa.<sup>84</sup> I was able to visit and conduct classroom observations in six of these schools (in 5 sub-cities). Two of the schools visited were primary schools,<sup>85</sup> two offered only grades 9 and 10 (lower secondary) and two offered grades 9 to 12. Two of the schools visited could be considered high-performing (relative to other public schools), two of them average and two of them low-performing. The two low-performing schools served the most disadvantaged neighborhoods, although the majority of students in Addis Ababa government secondary schools are from low-income families. The size of the schools varied depending on the number of grades offered and ranged from about 600 to 2,500 students. Class sizes ranged between 45 and 65 students, with most teachers assigned

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<sup>84</sup> Addis Ababa has 62 government secondary schools (MoE, 2014).

<sup>85</sup> The reason for the inclusion of the primary schools is that some teachers, as will be discussed later, are assigned to teacher in upper primary even though they are qualified to teach in secondary school.

classroom teaching (usually 3 to 4 periods a day), homeroom duties and extra-curricular activity responsibilities, although investment of time in each of these activities varied.

In all the schools visited the representation of women teachers was less than 20%. In several departments there was only one female teacher. Only one of the 14 schools had a female director, recently appointed. However, in all the schools girls were enrolled as students in equal or greater number than boys.

Four of the six schools visited were the same ones where I had observed PGDT students conduct their practicum and so had already become familiar with the school and surroundings. The other two were selected to diversify the sample in terms of location and student population. Access to schools was generally granted through a letter of introduction from my liaison at the AAU CoE&BS, which I presented to the school directors (see Appendix A).

### ***Research participants***

**Description:** Nineteen in-service teachers, sixteen women and three men, were interviewed. This included four of the women PGDT student-teachers who participated in the first two stages of research, who were interviewed again post-graduation seven months into full-time teaching. Detailed information about their backgrounds and experiences are presented in Chapters 7 and 9.

With respect to years of teaching experience, seven of the sixteen women in-service teachers interviewed had taught for a year and a half or less, seven teachers had taught between three to five years, and two teachers were in their seventh year of teaching. The three men who were interviewed were in their twenties and had taught between three and five years. The teaching subjects of participants is presented in Table

6. Most were teaching grades 9 and/or 10. Three of the women had been assigned to teach grade 7 and/or 8 (upper primary), despite being qualified to teach at the secondary school level, and two experienced women teachers were also teaching grade 11 (upper secondary/preparatory).

**Table 6: Teaching Subject of 19 In-Service Teachers Interviewed**

Subject	No. of participants teaching this subject
Biology	4 (1 man)
Chemistry	3
Geography	3 (1 man)
English	2
History	2
Mathematics	3 (1 man)
Civics	1
Physics	1
Total	19 (16 women, 3 men)

Three school directors and one guidance counselor, all men, were also interviewed. The latter had been a counselor for two years and had a Master's degree in social work. Two of the school directors had been in that position for more than five years and one for three years. They were all in their early to late forties and had previously served as secondary school teachers. Data from interviews with the three MoE staff described in the previous section, about policies and conditions related to in-service teachers, were also included in this stage (see Appendix B).

**Selection and recruitment:** The general procedure followed to recruit in-service teachers (other than the four met while PGDT students) was to go to one of the six schools identified, meet with the director or deputy director of the school to explain my project (and present the official letter of introduction – Appendix A) and ask permission to speak to the teachers. I would usually then ask the director to provide me with the names and teaching assignments of the women teachers and permission to enter the staff

room. This is where I met most of the teachers, or else asked to be introduced to a teacher I had particular interest in speaking with so as to diversify my sample.

My selection was purposeful in that I sought teachers under the age of 30, across subject fields, and at least some who were married and with children. The definition of “early career” was expanded to include any teacher in their early to late-twenties who had taught for less than eight years (most of them under five years) in order to explore more fully patterns of attrition, experiences of married teachers with children, and responses to occupational immobility. I also later actively sought out teachers who wanted to remain in teaching, by asking participants if they knew of any, as my first round of selection did not reveal any who fit this category. The school director and guidance counselor interviewed were from the three schools where I interviewed the most teachers.

## **Data Collection**

### **Interviews**

Two forms of interview were conducted for all three stages: unstructured, informal interviews and formal, semi-structured interviews. The former occurred as spontaneous conversations that unfolded in informal spaces on campus and in schools, as well as in teachers’ homes, in cafés and on taxis and included both women and men. As Davies points out (1999, p. 94), even though such interviews were unplanned and informal, “researchers still have in mind topics they wish to explore and questions they would like to pose, thus they direct the conversation with this in mind without imposing structure on the interaction.” Such data, which was either written down in a field

notebook during the conversation or shortly thereafter, proved helpful in contextualizing and supplementing responses gathered during more formal data collection.

Appendix B provides the interview protocols used for the formal, semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with different participants in this study. In line with an ethnographic approach, interview questions aimed at revealing “the cultural context of lives through an engaged exploration of the belief, values....and the structural forces underpinning socially patterned behavior” (Forsey, 2008, p.59). Questions were also designed to draw out details about how participants responded to constraint so that a reference to a particular challenge was usually followed up with questions about how this affected the participant and what they and others did in such circumstances.

The use of semi-structured interviews allowed me to move between and adapt questions as needed and to investigate an interviewee’s perceptions and experiences while maintaining a consistent framework (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This approach also had the advantage of allowing the interview to take on the form of a more natural conversation, encouraging participants to speak freely and to raise aspects I had not thought about.

As the interviews with PGDT students covered both their undergraduate and teacher education experiences, I conducted either one long interview of at least sixty minutes (several closer to ninety) covering both sets of experiences or two separate interviews on different occasions. I also had the opportunity with four of the PGDT students with whom I developed a close relationship to have several follow-up interviews and conversations during which time I was able to further explore certain themes. These participants became key informants who invited me into their homes and with whom I kept in touch over the 15 months of fieldwork, allowing me to conduct formal interviews with them again after they began teaching full-time.

AAU faculty and gender office staff also graciously allowed for interviews of an hour or longer. A second interview was conducted with four of the faculty and one of the Gender Office staff. As earlier noted, I had ongoing conversations with several of the faculty who would regularly invite me for coffee in the staff café where many informal conversations unfolded.

Interviews with in-service teachers took place in their classrooms, staff lounges or in nearby cafés, wherever they felt at ease, and were between 45 to 90 minutes in length. I developed a close relationship with four teachers who also became key informants, allowing for follow-up interviews and additional conversations. Furthermore, the longitudinal perspective afforded by following the four PGDT students with whom I had developed a strong relationship, from teacher training into full-time teaching, generated valuable insights into the factors affecting teacher well-being and agency and shifts in orientation toward the profession. This also allowed for thicker description and triangulation of other data collected.

All interviews except for four were audiotaped. In two of these four cases (one with a school director and the other a school guidance counselor), I did not introduce the option of audiotaping the interview because I sensed that it would cause unnecessary anxiety and so I simply took handwritten notes. In the other two cases there was a malfunction with the tape recorder and so I took copious notes instead.

Participants were given the option of being interviewed in Amharic but only three requested this. In those three cases, a research assistant who is a native Amharic-speaker and fluent in English served as translator during the interview and assisted with transcription and translation of the audio-recording afterwards. Participants did not

appear to have difficulty comprehending the interview questions in English but I encouraged them to ask for clarification at any time and to respond in Amharic if they felt so inclined, which worked well given that my Amharic comprehension is stronger than my spoken Amharic. As interviews were audio-recorded, I was able to double-check that I had accurately comprehend the responses in Amharic.

### **Observations and Shadowing**

During the 16 weeks of fieldwork at AAU (February to June 2014) I observed seven PGDT and two undergraduate retention classes, spent time in various other sites (e.g., hallways, libraries, dorms and campus cafés) on the Sidist and Arat Kilo campuses and attended events organized by the Gender Office such as a panel discussion on the university's newly drafted anti-harassment policy. My extended presence on campus and in these various spaces afforded me the opportunity to observe interactions, physical conditions and to informally converse with female and male students and faculty, including those from other departments, who were not formally included as participants in the study, as is common in ethnographic fieldwork. I also shadowed two of the PGDT students interviewed, who were staying in the dormitories, over the course of a day so as to gain a better understanding of their daily routine and living conditions.

Toward the end of this first half of the research, I was also able to visit four of the schools where the PGDT students were doing their practicum and to observe six of them teaching classes. I was able to observe first-hand student behavior, school conditions and the actions of student-teachers. I was also able to have conversations with several of the in-service teachers and mentors in these schools, as well as faculty supervisors, which confirmed what participants reported during interviews.



Throughout, I used extensive field notes and different notebooks for different stages of observation and analysis (Delament, 2008). In the formal classroom setting, I employed thick descriptions to capture the design and structure of the class, as well as faculty/teacher-student and peer-to-peer interactions. In addition, I would jot down observations and personal reflections throughout the day from which I developed longer memos elaborating on a theoretical link or identifying conflicting data, gaps and additional questions to be explored.<sup>86</sup>

In the second half of the research (August 2014 – May 2015), I visited the same four practicum schools again and an additional two schools. Visits were generally a day long and involved classroom observations, conducting formal interviews and spending time in the staff lounge and around campus talking with different teachers and staff. I observed eight classes and shadowed two teachers for a day, taking detailed notes on their daily routine, activities and interactions. I also visited the homes of four of the teachers interviewed. Such observations and shadowing provided additional insights not only into what teachers valued and the specific conditions of their lives but also how they were able to pursue valued goals, offering “privileged access” (Silverman, 2007, p. 91) to how they acted in response to different constraints.

Living in Addis Ababa for 18 months also gave me first-hand experience of the city and what current life in urban Ethiopia is like. It exposed me to the views of many different people with whom I was able to engage in conversation about the teaching profession and provided a deeper familiarity with the broader political, economic and

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<sup>86</sup> Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) note the importance of detailed recording of sensory observations and exact phrases heard because “something you thought was unimportant may in fact be crucial once you fit some of the pieces together” (p. 216). At the same time, however, I was cognizant of how exhaustive real-time field notes can interfere with the research process (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2007) and so I was critical of how I balanced both capturing and experiencing details of teachers’ lives, refining this balance over time.

cultural context of teachers' lives. Being married to an Ethiopian and having a young child aided integration into local life and particularly the social circle of women.

### **Protection of Human Subjects**

Procedures for data collection and analysis were developed in accordance with the guidelines established by the University of Maryland's Institutional Review Board (IRB). I explained the goal and purpose of my study to all participants and made them aware of the fact that they could opt out at any point. Individuals who selected to participate in the study were given a written consent form. At this point, participants were informed that the study had only minimal risks and at no time were they required to answer questions that made them feel uncomfortable. Participants were given ample time at different points to ask any questions they had and offered the option of having information about their rights and role in the study and the interview in Amharic.

As noted earlier, all but four interviews were audiotaped using a digital recording device, with the participant's consent, in a location that was comfortable for the participant. Permission was also sought from those whose interviews were not audiotaped, as well as those with whom I had extended conversations (long informal interviews), to write detailed notes. All information provided in the interview was kept confidential. Apart from myself, only my research assistant was granted select access to interviews. The interviews were then placed in a password-protected folder on my personal computer and each participant assigned a pseudonym. The seven journals of field notes that were produced were at all times kept securely with me or in a locked drawer.

## Data Analysis

### **Data Processing**

A very large amount of data was generated through this study: over 65 hours of audio recording and seven journals of field notes. I transcribed all interviews, except the handful that were conducted in Amharic, which were transcribed and translated by my research assistant. Although often described as tedious, transcription proved an important part of the inductive research process and allowed me to develop a close familiarity with the data that aided subsequent stages of analysis. It also helped inform and shape questions and themes to explore in further interviews and conversations, bringing to my attention seeming contradictions, gaps and rich areas to explore further while in the field. Transcription was done the evening interviews were conducted or shortly thereafter. For the most part, I wrote field notes while conducting observations and shadowing and returned to them to elaborate certain thoughts and reflections at the end of the day.

I found manual transcription useful as part of the early stage of data analysis, even though on average an hour of audio took approximately four hours to transcribe. Because certain comments and phrasing would inspire ideas and questions, this would often be accompanied by extended pauses during which I would write mini-reflections and memos resulting in over 400 hours spent on this process. While I initially intended to use NVIVO to analyze my data, I found manual coding on soft and hard copies of the data very productive and stimulating, so I stayed with that. I maintained both full, 'clean' copies of data, to which I would return to regain a holistic understanding, and additional documents with labels and coded excerpts.

## **Analysis**

Data analysis took place in two stages. In the first stage, I was looking for emerging themes and had no particular agenda against which the coding was aligned. Themes were considered prominent with respect to frequency (if the majority of participants raised the issue), the length and detail with which participants spoke about it, and the intensity of emotion with which they spoke or significance they ascribed to it. In relation to each theme, careful attention was given to how participants responded to the conditions and circumstances they described and to their interpretation of why and how the situation was as they perceived it. Observations from field notes about each theme and related interviews with secondary participants (e.g., faculty, MoE officials, male participants) were noted alongside. Any seeming contradictions and contrasting views or experiences were flagged and separate documents created to bring together related evidence from different sources to explore the issue more fully.

A second stage of data analysis was undertaken when the capability approach was fully adopted. It was through an iterative process, started early during the course of fieldwork, of initial data analysis, further reading of the theoretical and research literature, closer consideration of some of the new work in applying the capability approach to teachers' lives and returning to the data that the utility of the capability framework emerged. The value of the approach for this study, as a normative framework and conceptual tool, was confirmed by how readily and fruitfully it helped make meaning of the data collected and how it addressed certain tensions that had been identified (e.g., between women's representation in teaching and their well-being). The capability approach brought clarity and focus to the issue of constraints by pushing for more

specific and explicit consideration of what was being constrained and how. This led to clearer coding and analysis of relevant capabilities (in terms of real opportunities—o-capabilities—and capacities/internal powers—s-capabilities), functionings (as indicative of values and achievements), conversion factors and agency at each of the three stages examined in the study.

Generally, an aspect that could be considered a functioning, capability or constraint (or more specifically a conversion factor) was identified and coded as such if raised by at least one participant and was then explored more fully and given prominence if considered important by the majority (Walker, 2006a). Sometimes this was the majority within a small group of relevance, for example among mothers or those intending to teach for the long-term, and sometimes among the group as a whole (e.g., all pre-service teachers interviewed).

Sometimes the most fruitful analysis emerged from examination of contrasting experiences and seemingly contradictory data. Such data were given particular attention, prompting analysis of general patterns among participants but also more granular and close examination of the experiences of two or three participants through mini-comparative case studies (e.g., the cases of Meron and Samira discussed in Chapter 9).

### **Role of the Researcher and Reflexivity**

In qualitative research, the investigator is the primary instrument for collecting and analyzing data (Merriam, 1998). This calls for reflexivity and transparency as a means to improve the reliability of research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Being conscious of how subjectivity shapes interpretations helps to shed light on partialities, exclusions and agendas that were previously not clear or evident. A brief description is offered here of

how my personal experiences led to my interest in this study and some of the ways my social situatedness as researcher interfaced with the research.

Although of Iranian descent, I was raised in Botswana and have been married to an Ethiopian for more than a decade, so that sub-Saharan Africa is the region of the world that I most readily call home. Ethiopia is also where I spent a year after graduating from college working on a community development program that involved collaborating with young Ethiopian teachers in the central part of the country (including Addis Ababa and some of the towns from which the participants in this study hail). This study is in part a tribute to the young Ethiopian teachers whose insightful commentary on their country and its development inspired me to pursue graduate studies in education and to choose Ethiopia as the site of my research. I was also struck at that time by how few of those teachers were women. In that respect, I bring to this study a feminist stance that I have adopted over the years through my study of social theory and work with women's rights NGOs in the US and different parts of Africa. A good part of this work (including two years doing in-takes for gender-based asylum seekers) has involved listening to the stories of women's lives. It is through listening to these stories that my fascination with the relationship between structural constraint and the efficacy of human action has developed.

At the same time as these motivations and experiences are at play, however, I was well cognizant in carrying out this study that I was a foreigner of light complexion with only a basic command of Amharic.<sup>87</sup> I was conscious that my western education and feminist sensibilities are strong influences on my thought and I worked hard to try to understand what

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<sup>87</sup> It helped that I am a woman, and in sharing that I was in Addis Ababa for an extended period with my Ethiopian husband and our four-year old son, participants visibly opened up and warmed towards me.

participants were saying from their perspective, careful not to prematurely assume bias or dismiss any details offered as insignificant. Moreover, I became aware early on that there was need for extended silences and a slower pace when talking with people in Ethiopia, and that participants' narratives did not always follow a linear structure of logic, so that I tried not to rush people or interrupt their flow of thought with my questions.

Whenever I could, I interspersed my speech with Amharic and followed local custom, such as engaging in extended greetings and introductions. This was always well-received and allowed me to be seen by participants as someone genuinely endeavoring to learn about their context and lives rather than an authority with “expert” knowledge that had come to evaluate them. More than anything else, I was vigilant in my day-to-day behavior and sought to be respectful, transparent, humble and appreciative.

### **Generalizability and Trustworthiness**

Qualitative research is sometimes compared unfavorably with quantitative research in terms of its lack of ability to generalize findings to larger or other populations (external validity—which Guba and Lincoln (1994) discuss in terms of *transferability*). Whereas quantitative methods allow for broad generalizations about a larger universe of people (although there are always limits to this generalization), qualitative research examines in depth the experiences of a small number of individuals or group, so as to understand a shared experience, establish a standpoint, reveal social forms, and develop concepts. It is toward this kind of *analytic generalizability* (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011) that this study aims.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Karp (quoted in Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 54) describes this “analytic generalizability” in terms of “the discovery of underlying social forms.”

The claim, therefore, is not that the conditions and dynamics described in this study apply in the same way for all women teachers in all urban contexts in Ethiopia or the region. A degree of transferability, however, is sought through the offering of interpretive explanations that allow readers to anticipate—but not predict as is often the objective of quantitative studies—what might be happening in similar situations (Geertz, 1973). The centrality of the researcher in interpretive research, moreover, is recognized and as such the aim has been simply to “provide the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether the transfer can be contemplated as a possibility” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316).

Qualitative researchers have also re-conceptualized (internal) validity in different ways to get at the trustworthiness and soundness of a study; “the process by which the researcher earns the confidence of the reader that he or she has “gotten it right” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 48). To this end, the integrity and credibility of the researcher and the research can be demonstrated through the use of thick description, negative case analysis and examination of alternative theoretical explanations (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This was aided in this study by triangulation and comparative treatment of data and memo-writing, and my extended time in the field that allowed for the collection of supplemental data. I also shared drafts of the dissertation with a trusted AAU faculty member and discussed my findings and conclusions with different participants.

### **Limitations**

My lack of fluency in Amharic was a limitation in carrying out this research. Although English is the language in which participants completed undergraduate studies and are expected to teach, it was their second or third language and, thus, constrained



their ability to speak with fluency and ease. When offered the option of being interviewed in Amharic with the aid of a translator, however, most opted to proceed in English. This may have been out of a sense of pride or accommodation to me, but it had the advantage of allowing me to build a closer rapport and have more direct and easier engagement (e.g., when shadowing) with participants. I encouraged participants to use Amharic at any point and to ask for clarification if what I said was not clear, which several did. Also, three participants did request to have interviews conducted in Amharic, which was done with the aid of a translator. Comparing interviews that were conducted fully in Amharic with a translator and those in English (or a mix of English and Amharic), the content of what was covered was not noticeably different; neither was the length at which participants spoke, but there were fewer grammatical misconstructions and, therefore, at times, less ambiguity. There were also instances where participants were able to use an Amharic term or phrase that strikingly captured the point they were making in a way that they might not have been able to do in English.

I also noted how gendered expectations in the Ethiopian context played into interview dynamics in ways that were at times limiting. For example, women were sometimes reluctant to speak about challenges they faced, and often followed up such a discussion with “But this is no problem. We are strong,” reflecting a common view that quiet endurance is a sign of strength, particularly for women. It was notable that the men I spoke with were generally more verbose and willing to offer critique and complaint. This reticence on the part of women was usually overcome as rapport was built and follow-up questions asked, but a couple of participants never really overcame their shyness or sense that it was improper to speak at length about their challenges. As a

result, two interviews (1 PGDT student and 1 in-service teacher) were noticeably briefer and less detailed than the others.

With regard to the stage of research on undergraduate experiences, interviewing PGDT students was both advantageous and limiting in some regards. It was a strategic way to reach the exact population that goes on to become teachers and to gain insight into university experiences across the country. It meant, however, that I had to rely on participants' recollection of their undergraduate experiences from previous years (most having graduated the summer before). This likely resulted in forgetting of certain aspects, distortion of some details, and inability to capture the raw feelings of more immediate experiences. On the other hand, it allowed for more reflective narratives from individuals who made it through all three years of undergraduate study. The fact that certain aspects of their undergraduate experience, such as sexual harassment or navigating the first year of study, were so vividly remembered also indicated their significance. I did try to supplement data collection by including participants who were currently enrolled as undergraduate students and those who had the previous semester received near failing grades (i.e., were as close as I could get to those who are forced to drop out) but these were few in number and all AAU students. The faculty and Gender Office staff interviewed were also only from AAU.

With respect to the stage focused on in-service teaching experiences, the original intent was to spend at least a week, if not more, in four secondary schools but it became clear early on that gaining permission for such extended access to schools and finding suitable volunteer tasks for me to do would be challenging. The general air of suspicion and cautiousness about anyone from outside conducting observations and research in

schools, both on the part of government and school directors, was high. This was something I was able to overcome for the purposes of day visits through a letter of official introduction from the AAU CoE&BS and friendly conversation with directors but I deemed it unwise to ask for a longer presence. Since I did not spend more than four days (and not consecutively) in any one school, I expanded the number of schools visited to six. I also spent time with several teachers in their homes and at social gatherings to which they invited me.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has situated the research in a qualitative paradigm and explained how it is informed by feminist epistemology and methodology. It has shown how ethnographic methods were used to collect and analyze data in relation to the three stages of undergraduate university study, teacher education and early teaching. It has documented how the research took place across different research sites and involved different groups of participants relevant to each stage and how the data collected was analyzed in two phases. Finally, it highlighted the role of the researcher, issues of generalizability and trustworthiness and some of the limitations of the study. The next four chapters present the data and analysis that resulted from this methodological approach.

## Chapter 6: Undergraduate University Experiences

This chapter is concerned with the experiences of young women during their undergraduate studies in Ethiopian public universities prior to their entry into teacher training.<sup>89</sup> The first part of the chapter presents the most prominent themes that emerged from interviews with recent female graduates enrolled in the PGDT program about their undergraduate experiences, as well as with current AAU undergraduate students, faculty and staff, and from field observations (see Chapter 5). The second part offers a discussion of these findings with respect to the critical capabilities and prevailing conversion factors they bring to light.

The discussion of constraints in this chapter centers on conversion factors that impact the extent to which women students entering HE from poor and rural backgrounds (like the vast majority of those entering the teaching profession) are able to convert their “resource” (a place in university, bringing with it access to classroom instruction, faculty interaction, educational and library resources, extracurricular activities, room and board, etc.) into critical capabilities valuable for successful participation in HE education and professional life. Fraser’s concept of “parity of participation” is taken into account with respect to successful participation in HE so that attention is given to women’s real opportunities to successfully engage in university study, to participate in university life as true peers with men, and to develop a wide range of s-capabilities (“skill” or “substantive” capabilities (Gasper, 1997) that will enhance their well-being and agency beyond university.

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<sup>89</sup> As previously noted, prospective secondary school teachers in Ethiopia are expected to graduate with a bachelor’s degree in a field other than education and then complete the one-year Post-Graduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT).

## Emergent Themes

### **University as a Potentially Liberating Space**

In contrast to most other aspects discussed in this chapter, which relate to constraints, several participants described university study in terms of an expansion of freedom and possibilities. This was often expressed when comparing what was experienced before, at home and in school, or in contrast to the more limited opportunities of other female members of their families and communities. In this regard, there was an appreciation for what HE can and should offer all students.

Several of the participants from rural backgrounds described their earlier experiences of schooling, particularly secondary school, as very challenging. For some of the women, the value of their being educated as a female, particularly beyond primary school, was questioned by their family or home community:

[S]<sup>90</sup> . . . By the way my brother is the one who has helped me. Before that, I didn't obtain any help from my family. They say "What is she doing studying?"

[N] What do they want you to do?

[S] They want me to marry and to just live. Because of that they didn't know the importance of learning and teaching. [Female, Biology PGDT student]

The society is of the opinion that women do not need to go to school. For example, in my area, there are only two or three females who have made it to the university. [Female, Geography PGDT student]

Some participants described having commuted to nearby towns for secondary school, staying apart from their families during the week and then travelling home for the week-end where domestic work awaited them. Others who lived at home while attending

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<sup>90</sup> Where there is a dialogue quoted, [S] refers to the student being interviewed and [N] to myself. Where a faculty member is being interviewed, [F] is used.

school were responsible for domestic work throughout the week.<sup>91</sup> In contrast, living in dorms in the university freed them from such work, as expressed by these two participants:<sup>92</sup>

[N] What did you like about university?

[S] Freedom. For learning there is freedom. It is good. That means it is a place where we can utilize resources equally. [Female, Biology PGDT student]<sup>93</sup>

In the university it is good because the backwardness and some family problems are avoided and the female, the female is feeling that they are having equal opportunity to men and they try their best. But there are some females, they cannot manage and return to their homes. They return back. [Female, Biology teacher, grade 9]

These two quotes speak to a commonly-held understanding of gender equality where men and women are given equal access to HE and to resources. However, as the latter part of the last quote suggests, not everyone is equally advantaged to be able to convert resources into real opportunities and valued outcomes.

Many participants considered themselves fortunate to have been able to attend university and articulated hopes and aspirations for a future significantly different from

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<sup>91</sup> Not all of the participants interviewed were expected to cook, clean and care for younger siblings when growing up. Some participants described their experience as being different from other girls by virtue of their family's resources and urban residence, their parents' views on gender equality and the importance of education, or, strikingly, by virtue of birth order. Several participants were the last born child and for this reason, they explained, there were left free "simply to study and play" (Female, Physics PGDT student). In contrast, older female siblings were often held responsible for household work and some did not enter or complete secondary school. These older siblings were often times married at a young age and, in the case of at least three participants, financially supported their younger sibling through university.

<sup>92</sup> Some students, particularly those attending universities in large urban areas like Addis Ababa, lived off campus with family. There can be definite advantages to living with family, such as better/more familiar food, better sanitation, safety and companionship (in addition to receiving a stipend in compensation for room and board), but for some women it means the continuation of domestic burdens. One participant I was interviewing had a friend with her and when she told her friend to go on home, her friend said she'd rather wait for her because when she goes home there is a lot of house work to do and she'd rather be here (Field notes, 24 March, 2014).

<sup>93</sup> Participants often used the present tense when discussing their undergraduate experiences, even though most had graduated and were recounting past occurrences. This is because of limited fluency in English. Careful attention was given to ensure that only those parts of interviews referring to undergraduate study (and not the teacher education program) was used for the analysis of this stage and only those accounts are quoted in this chapter.

the lives of their mothers and, in some cases, sisters. Whatever the struggles and challenges, HE was viewed to be of vital importance in enhancing their opportunities and future well-being. One participant who returned home due to repeated bouts of malaria while in university stated:

When I came home, I realized that without education, nothing is possible. Especially for women, her destiny is education. A lot of opportunities are opened when you are educated.....Getting a good score and entering the university is very hard, so why do I withdraw from university? You will raise a question to yourself on why you don't become strong and finish.  
[Female, Amharic PGDT student]

Unfortunately, for too many women, completing undergraduate studies is about surviving, struggling and enduring.

### **Sexual Harassment**

In contrast to the expanded freedom described above, the threat and incidence of sexual harassment had the opposite effect of constraining and restricting that space. Sexual harassment was not an aspect this study specifically sought to investigate. It was, however, brought up by 12 of the 16 female graduates and undergraduates interviewed and by several others. The perceived threat alone seemed to have profound effect.

The form of harassment most commonly discussed and most troubling to participants was faculty approaching students for sex in exchange for grades. If the girl refused, then the consequence was usually that her grade was lowered or she was failed. Below are a few excerpted accounts by participants of their own personal experiences or that of close friends, describing some of the dynamics at work when female students are sexually harassed by faculty:

[N] Did you face any problems as a female student?

[S] Yeah. There are some problems. Actually, my grade [hesitates]...has been....eh, kind of....well, the lecturer asked something and I said no. He didn't fail me but he gave me C and I know that is not my grade. I know I did better than that. But because I said no, he gave me C. And there is nothing I can do at that time because he is the one. He is the teacher. I have to obey him. So, I did nothing.

[N] Could you do anything [about her friend who experienced sexual harassment]?

[S] What can I do for her? I was very young at that time. I didn't have knowledge. It is scary for us....Her parents, they are not in Addis Ababa. They live in Gondar. If she tells them, they don't understand. They are not educated so they don't understand her.

[N] Would you tell your parents if this happened to you?

[S] I don't think I will tell my parents. It is very hard to tell them. They will think I did something to make him ask. [Female, Physics PGDT student]

I have a friend from university. She is very strong, I tell you! At that time, my friend had an Indian lecturer. One day, when she met him in his office he tried to rape her. Just like that! He threatened that he would give her an F if she resisted. She fought back and managed to get away. We took pictures of her hand, where he grab her. Together we went to the Registrar's office and Gender Office to report it. The Registrar's office told us that if we take action it will be "a problem for Ethiopia-Indian diplomatic relations." They tell us that if we make noise my friend may lose her grade. But we continue to try. We also tell some of our lecturers who support us. We really risked her getting an F. Then the lecturer was released and went back home but we were not told why. Before this we found out that he has harassed more than 10 girls but the girls didn't want to speak about it. My friend she is really strong.....Here in AAU may be this kind of thing is less because there is more attention on the lecturers. There, nobody hears about it or cares. [Male, Physics PGDT student]

What features prominently in such accounts is a feeling on the part of students that little can be done about such acts. Participants said that telling a close friend was the most likely action following such an experience but friends may feel helpless and fearful themselves, resorting to coping mechanisms like encouraging their friend to just be grateful that it wasn't worse. Sometimes there was an element of self-blame ("I should have known better than to put myself in such a situation") or the fear that others would



place such blame on them if they report. No one reported seeking or receiving any counseling support after such experiences. Some participants said they would report harassment to the Gender Office, if accessible, but few expressed confidence that the latter would result in action against the perpetrator or protect them from prejudicial action by other faculty. The last account given above shows considerable exercise of agency on the part of the participant's friend (and his), as well as support from other faculty, but even in this case they were unclear as to whether their efforts resulted in the lecturer's departure (it was not announced as a dismissal) and there were other affected females who did not want to speak up about what they had experienced. In the absence of viable institutional structures to address such issues a sense of disempowerment prevailed, manifested in reluctance to report sexual violence and associated psychological stress.

A troubling adaptive strategy that emerges from this context can be described as *distancing*. Participants reported efforts to create distance between themselves and faculty as a means of protecting themselves. Female students stated that they avoided meeting individually with faculty and attending office hours unless absolutely required, in which case they would try to go with other classmates. This perpetuated the view that it is safer to blend into the crowd and not distinguish oneself by speaking too vocally or dressing in a way that may be "outstanding."

Not all women responded to such constraints through accommodation. The issue of dress, for example, appeared to be one about which some young women were becoming more vocal and exercising agency in the form of resistance. For example, I asked one participant, whose friend experienced sexual harassment because she was dressed in a way that was deemed as inviting such action, if that affected how she chose

to dress or how she would advise her younger sister or daughter to dress. She was adamant that women should not be restricted in this way, pointed to her own above-the-knee-length skirt and insisted with respect to her sister/daughter's choice of dress that "it's her right. She should dress how she wants." The freedom to choose how to dress without suffering harm to body or reputation was also prominent on the agenda of the recently-formed and growing feminist student organization on the AAU campus, the "Yellow Movement," to which I will return later.

Despite this growing consensus regarding the rights of women and emergent instances of collective action, most participants prioritized their safety and successful completion of studies over realizing freedom with respect to dress or changing the status quo. A couple of participants also suggested that part of the reason why women do not volunteer for leadership positions such as class representative is to not draw attention to themselves or put themselves in a vulnerable position of having to interact with men in positions of authority. This distancing strategy was even recommended to female students by concerned faculty. I quote from this account at length because the student summarizes in detail the prevalent view on the subject:

There are students who left school all together because of this kind of thing. . . . So it is better not to approach the lecturers and also not show yourself to others as much as possible. Your relationship with lecturers should be distanced. Otherwise, if your relationship is too close and you get too close to the lecturer, then it depends on the individual's mind. Some people are really nice. They think and worry about us. There are good teachers even though they are men and older. But there are others who would scare you by saying if you don't mess around with me, you won't pass, or I will kick you out or I will give you F. Since one of the female lecturers warned me about it and told me to stay away, I never went to the office. As a result I receive some strong statements from the lecturers for sending other students to their office for handing my assignment. I never went, though. Hence, that is how I never had a problem. [Female, Amharic PGDT student]

Instances were also referred to in which female students approached male lecturers with the proposition of a sexual transaction, although this was described usually as something “other girls” did to be able to stay in the university:

[S] Honestly, I tell you the reality. Some of the girls in my class, first semester they live by their achievement. But after first semester they have passed by contact with lecturers, by sexual contacts. By that means they are continuing. They see from their friends, we should contact lecturer so he give me grade or something else. So they can do that one for survival.  
[Female, Biology PGDT student]

Whatever the actual prevalence of such exchanges that they are seen as a viable option by some and are perceived as being prevalent, feeds into the general view that women are less capable intellectually than men and that they do not belong in the space of the university except to fulfill the desires of men. Some faculty expressed that solicitation on the part of female students was a violation of their rights as faculty, missing the point that this too is a manifestation of gender injustice because it is premised on unequal power relations, is enabled by past and present actions of male faculty and is linked to culturally prescribed expressions of sexuality.

In contrast to students’ reports, several AAU faculty, women and men, expressed the view that the incidents of sexual harassment by faculty are not common anymore and that channels exist for students to dispute grades or file complaints. One faculty member went further, suggesting that this is a story under-achieving women tell “to excuse their poor performance” making it more of an issue than it is.

A couple of observations can be made in this regard, not to explain away such views but to provide further context. One is that the incidence and perceived threat of sexual harassment is greater in more remote and newer universities where both students

and faculty feel they are beyond the view of the responsible authorities or anyone that might care. It was suggested by students that faculty in such institutions are particularly prone to feeling that they are better than those around them even though they may actually have lower qualifications. Such faculty had less regard for acceptable codes of conduct and gender awareness in general. AAU, on the other hand, is very much in the spotlight and faculty reported there having been numerous trainings and that when a lecturer in the past was accused of such acts it quickly became public knowledge and served as a warning to others (although only in 2015 was an actual code of conduct and anti-harassment policy being passed). The general sense of many CoE&BS faculty was that they were well aware of such issues, that they were not personally to blame, and that there are “bigger” problems in HE to deal with than this. In part, I read this as a kind of fatigue in response to ongoing rhetoric (albeit backed by little action) about gender inequality and the issue of sexual harassment specifically. This fatigue, nonetheless, poses a challenge for sustained institutionally-backed action against abusive views and acts against women.

Harassment by male peers and senior students was also reported by participants in this study, and other studies have shown this to be an ongoing problem for female students in Ethiopia (Molla & Cuthbert, 2014; Mulugeta, 2010). Most participants viewed this as troublesome and distracting but something they could usually ward off on their own—“with students you can tell them to go” (Female, Biology PGDT student)—in contrast to the misuse of power by lecturers. Consequently, it was not an aspect discussed at great length by participants and seemed to be, undeservedly, excused away by female students as “to be expected” or as “natural” behavior for young men.

Another aspect of the threat of sexual harassment and violence to women on university campuses frequently raised was that from men in the surrounding community.

This was most commonly experienced in the more remote and newer universities:

In that region men are completely dominant. They completely expect you to do what they ask, like asking for friendship or something. It is very difficult to learn in that situation. . . . When we have to go out we go in a group. It is very difficult. Even they throw stones. So mostly, we spend our time on the campus. [Female, Biology PGDT student]

Sexual relations with older men (“sugar daddies”) off campus were also reported as being undertaken by some female students. Most participants described this as an adaptive strategy in response to financial constraints. Aside from blame, however, very little was available by way of counseling or support for female students wishing to extract themselves from such relationships or to report abuse. Such instances reveal a general situation of vulnerability for women and reinforcement of their misrecognition in the university context as sexual objects.

### **Gender Bias**

Gender bias or prejudice against women is related to sexual harassment in that it is rooted in a fundamental misrecognition of women (Fraser, 1997). Participants reported, particularly in the context of the affirmative action policy, that lecturers and peers (men and women) began with the assumption that female students will struggle academically and were then “surprised” when they passed or did well. To do well as a woman is, thus, exceptional while to do well as a man is expected. A few also discussed how when they asked questions, the reaction was “what is she doing here? Doesn’t she know anything?” but when male classmates asked questions they were viewed as just being engaged and rightfully seeking clarification (Female, Physics PGDT student).

There was also a general sense that female faculty, in their fewness, were something of an oddity and similarly out of place, as indicated by this student's observation:

The female teachers are extremely small in number. Most of them have only a Master's degree. You will have one in one department, another department one only. When we see a female, we have to verify if she is really a professor. [Female, Amharic PGDT student]

Another aspect of prejudice that several participants raised and some discussed at length was having their intellectual capacity judged according to their appearance and dress:

Most of the time people judge by our clothes, by our appearance, they judge who we are. But it's not correct. Because I wear a kind of stylish clothes, they think I cannot score high like this. They think that I am not serious, I am kind of a stupid girl.... Even the lecturers think like this. [Female, Chemistry PGDT student]<sup>94</sup>

Despite the various manifestations of prejudice again women in Ethiopian HEIs, I found that most participants, perhaps as a coping mechanism, did not try to read between the lines or dwell on prejudicial treatment, particularly with respect to one-on-one interactions. It was mostly brushed off or not noticed. Participant's initial response to questions about whether women and men were treated differently in the university was often "no, it is equal" but then in the course of the interview or conversation different biases would emerge. At the end of the conversation, the conclusion was often that such things "are of no matter," that women are strong and can manage:

You have to be strong. There are different problems, of course, for females but you can overcome these problems through your strength. You

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<sup>94</sup>One day on the AAU campus I was talking with a male Biology PGDT student about his experiences in the program when I realized that it was time for my next interview. I looked around and didn't see any women so I asked the male student I was talking to if he knew X. He thought a bit and said, "Oh, is she the one who likes to wear short skirts?" I thought to myself, so much for X being one of only three female physics graduates in the program! (Field notes, April 2014)

have to be strong. Especially being female here in Ethiopia, it's difficult. There are different problems, you may face different challenges. From teachers, from your classmates, and other people but you can overcome. [Female, History PGDT student]

While such strength and perseverance is laudable, even necessary, it places the burden on the individual woman to endure and overcome and to “prove” herself capable.

### **First Year of University Study**

Many of the participants described the first year of university as a very difficult transition. Several challenges were discussed with respect to adjusting academically to new modes of learning expected of them and realization that their prior academic preparation was inadequate:

It is very hard to get used to a university environment right after high school. The way lectures are given, and in fact in every aspect, is different from high school... in high school the teachers will accompany you. The first year in university, we are on our own. It really stresses us out. [Female, Amharic PGDT student]

I think the experience, the background of the females make it difficult. In high school we are engaged for helping our parents. We don't have experience, the reading experience, the note-taking experience or listening from others...it makes university hard. [Female, Geography PGDT student]

Despite these challenges,<sup>95</sup> participants reported a general lack of academic support. It was explained that tutoring services, where they existed, were organized by department and most did not have access to such support:

There are some departments that during exam time they will give tutorials. But as far as I know, there is not as such support for females in the campus because they thought they [women] are put in the same position; that is,

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<sup>95</sup> Participants also described feeling homesick during their first year and finding it difficult to navigate a new and diverse social environment: “It is the first time for me to live away from my family. I have none of my sisters or brothers near me. I am crying a lot. Especially at holiday times when I do not have money to go home, I am crying.” (Female, Math PGDT student)

they will be in the same building, they will eat the same thing, they will learn in the same class as the men. So there is no need to help them. [Female, Civics PGDT student]

In this context, the unsupportive attitude of some lecturers and low expectations of students posed a severe obstacle:

The problem is not as such the subject matter. Mostly it is the lecturers. They are worse than expected. That means they are not concerned about how you learn....They are not showing us how to meet the criteria, how to be good students. It's like they just don't want to see us graduate. They want us to fail and go back to our home. That's just, I think, their plan. [Female, Math PGDT student]

A few of the lecturers are trying to help. But the others! I don't know, they have this ego. [Laughs] They have got this huge problem. It's like they are waiting for you to fail. [Female, AAU undergraduate student]

A troubling adaptive strategy that emerged from participant accounts was internalization of the low expectations expressed by some faculty and peers. Sometimes this manifested as a satisfaction with mediocrity but other times led to behaviors shaped by unequal power relations, such as seeking exchange of grades for sex, as already mentioned.

Participants expressed anxiety about surviving academically; having to compete with others in this new environment and having to speak up in front of others while fighting back feelings of inferiority. Faced with limited institutional support and at times harsh negative attitudes of faculty, the few students who experienced positive interaction and encouragement from a faculty member remembered this as being instrumental in helping them with specific problems, reviving hope and motivating them to work through challenges. In this regard, the fewness of female faculty as potential role models and



sources of support<sup>96</sup> and the absence of healthy mentoring relationships between faculty and students in general were lacunae raised by several participants, including faculty.

### **Social and Romantic Relationships**

Responses to these challenges primarily involved relying on peers for academic and social support and exerting greater individual effort through longer hours of study (with little sleep). Participants described developing strong bonds of friendship, particularly with dorm-mates as they learned to navigate the university environment together. Comfort was found in forming social groups that moved together on and off campus. Such relations, however, were often bound by class and ethnicity<sup>97</sup> and complicated by romantic expectations and dependencies. There were also limits to how much one could rely on friends for support:

Yeah, when I was in first year I usually study with my friends. But, I guess, they will get tired of you if every time you ask show me this, show me that. The only thing I can do by my own is reading but the calculations are too hard. That one just became more and more and I can't do it by myself. [Female, AAU undergraduate student]

Managing time and relationships was also raised as a challenge. In this regard, it was commonly expressed that girls invested more time in romantic relationships than boys, often to their detriment:

Sometimes girls are following the boys. They pass their time with boyfriends and then the exams come the boys have passed, the girls have failed. Because the boys are studying...They call their girlfriends when they have finished studying. But whenever the boy wants to meet her, she is available every time. She leaves everything. [Female, AAU undergraduate student]

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<sup>96</sup> Arguably, it should not be the burden of female faculty to be offering such support.

<sup>97</sup> Some participants described, for example, how notes and “cheat sheets” were sometimes circulated only among those of a certain ethnicity or from a certain high school (marking rural-urban and class distinctions) and that romantic pairings often took place among people of the same ethnicity.

For some participants, feelings of isolation and the need for academic support encouraged the development of relationships, particularly between sexes, that were not healthy, increased dependency and added to their problems. Asking male classmates for help was described as particularly problematic as the expectation was often that romantic companionship or sexual favors would be offered in return. While some participants were able to navigate romantic relations and new social experiences on their own, difficulties encountered by others highlighted the need for counseling support services that generally did not exist.

### **Financial Problems**

Limited financial resources was a problem that several of the participants raised. While dormitory accommodation and dining in the university cafeteria were generally provided to those who need it as part of the cost-sharing agreement entered into by students with the MoE, there were additional expenses that several participants stated were difficult to meet without some family support or student financial aid. Those who lived off-campus with family and received a stipend in lieu of the cost for room and board generally had less of an issue unless the stipend went straight to supporting their family. Expenses most commonly referenced were for basic toiletries, stationery and photocopying of course readings. The latter was considered particularly important given the limited access to reference materials and textbooks. Money was also needed at times for clothes and for transportation home during long holidays. Money for tea and coffee and eating out with friends were mentioned by some, although this was considered a luxury by most. For students from rural areas and small towns, university gave first-hand

exposure to the lives of more affluent young people and with it a heightened sense of the inequalities in Ethiopian society.

It appeared that there were several strategies for dealing with such financial constraint. As already mentioned, some girls established sexual relationships with older and more affluent men in exchange for financial support (although this was mostly reported as a common practice that “others” engaged in). Two participants said they had boyfriends who were better off and somewhat older who paid for them when they went out and who helped them with money. At least one participant tutored high school students throughout her undergraduate degree. This was enabled by the fact that she went to university in Addis Ababa where there are many secondary school students and families that can afford to pay for tutoring services. This took much time and energy but it allowed her to support herself through university without help from her family, who had disowned her because she refused to marry the man to whom she had been betrothed as a child.

Two other participants reported that they received financial support from bursaries administered by the Gender Office. One of these women entered university with a small scholarship and the other sought it out during her first year. Both participants attended more established universities where such programs were available, albeit inconsistently and on a small-scale.

### **Campus Infrastructure and Environment**

A very common set of challenges raised by participants were those relating to the physical environment of the university campus. Such problems were reported to be worse in the newer and more remote university campuses. As one participant commented when

asked to compare her (recently established) undergraduate university to AAU, “You can’t compare it (laughing). That one is made out of mud!”

Several participants discussed the challenges of being at a university in a climate that was hot and where diseases such as malaria and typhoid are common. Participants reported losing weight and suffering from ongoing health problems. In general, and particularly in such difficult environs, lack of fresh water and unsanitary conditions were cited by women as major problems. Study participants reported having to go off campus to bathe and having difficulty finding suitable places to do so. For one participant, the difficult physical conditions aggravated other challenges causing her to withdraw from her studies for some time:

The bathroom is terrible. We had water problem. If there is no water, it is extremely difficult for women. The dormitory was a four story building, and ours was on the fourth floor. It is extremely difficult to fill up the bucket with water and transport it all the way to the fourth floor. Then there is malaria. I have become half my weight during that time, so I came home for a year. [Female, Amharic PGDT student]

Participants also described crowded, noisy dorms and difficulties finding suitable places to study. In some universities, the general security situation dictated that libraries had to be closed by 6 pm, making it difficult to find a quiet place to study in the evening. On other campuses it was not considered safe by women to go to the library at night (and some female dorms had an early curfew). This was particularly difficult in hot climates where participants reported that the heat made it near impossible to study during the day. Participants described strategies like trying to sleep during the day and waking up in the middle of the night or early hours of the morning to study but this was not without difficulty given that dorm rooms were cramped and shared with several other students (sometimes rooms built for four occupants housed double the number). The few

participants on campuses with female-only libraries in the dormitories said that these were very helpful for being accessible for extended hours and free of harassment from male students.

### **Language of Instruction**

Although students in Ethiopia begin to study in English from Grade 7 and the language of instruction in secondary school is English, many do not develop enough language competence to be able to successfully engage in HE studies (or secondary school for that matter). Several participants indicated that it was for the first time in university that they were pressed by lecturers to speak in English and had to consult a variety and large volume of materials in English for their courses. In secondary school, most teachers had translated class lectures and sometimes materials into the local language and allowed them to speak their own language during class.<sup>98</sup>

Faculty I interviewed suggested that although female students are commonly thought to be better at learning languages, their English fluency and confidence to speak in English was often poorer than that of male peers. It was suggested that this was due to limited opportunities to use the language growing up, because girls are more confined to the home and to socialization with other women and are often discouraged from speaking in class. Limited time available to spend on studies in general, because of domestic duties, was also said to factor in.

Despite this awareness of limited opportunities, there was a tendency by faculty and others to judge students' general competence and intelligence according to their language proficiency. This worked particularly to the disadvantage of women from rural

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<sup>98</sup> The dominance of Amharic and the limited English fluency of teachers was a common feature of the secondary school classrooms I observed in Addis Ababa as well.

backgrounds. Sometimes the arrogant attitudes of lecturers silenced students and further eroded confidence:

[T] Yes, we start to learn English 10 or 15 years back but it's just difficult for us. With my friend, the lecturer didn't like her English-speaking skills or how she presents in the class. He said we can't speak Amharic, so when she tried to speak in English, he said "Did you really learn English? I don't think you are ever going to improve. You are just stupid." He said that. [Female, Math PGDT student]

Faculty members interviewed also expressed frustration and felt constrained in their ability to teach because of the limited English of their students and, in a couple of cases, their own. Some discussed how having to learn in English effectively makes people feel dumbed down and one female faculty member acknowledged how this functions to deepen the alienation felt by women in the university environment.

Students from regions where Amharic was not a dominant language stated that their limited fluency in Amharic was a further limitation because university lecturers would often try to clarify or explain a concept to students in Amharic if they felt English was not understood but this still left these students in the dark. None of the participants interviewed, however, indicated that they had received language support while in university.

### **Field of Study**

In 2008, Ethiopia instituted what is commonly referred to as the "70:30" policy in which 70% of university students are tracked into sciences and technology (which includes engineering, IT, medical, agricultural and life sciences) and 30% into the social sciences and humanities (Yigenzaw, 2007).<sup>99</sup> There are currently six bands of study in

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<sup>99</sup> This policy adopted from East Asia, sought to increase the university intake ratio of Sciences and Technology to Social Sciences and Humanities from 58:42 in 2008/09 to 70:30 in 2014/15 and is required

HEIs but choice of band as well as choice of specific subjects within each band by students is limited as field of study is assigned by the MoE based on GPA, available places and students' top three subject preferences. Subject choice is, therefore, particularly constrained for students with a low GPA as different bands/fields have different entry requirements.

Even though choice is greatly limited, student preferences and their gendered nature can be discerned in the disproportionate representation of women in some subjects. For example, both national HEI statistics indicate that women have a strong preference for Biology over other subjects within the Natural and Computational Sciences Band.<sup>100</sup> Women comprised 51.2% of Year 1 Biology undergraduate students in the country in 2012/13 (compared to total enrollment of 28% for women) and in AAU they comprised 51.8% of Year 1 Biology students (compared to 24% general enrollment) (MoE, 2013). Under-representation of women in other subjects, such as physics and math, relative to their representation in total enrollments is less clearly discernable, but it is consistently less than in Biology (e.g., women comprised 31.25% of Year 1 Physics students nationally in 2012/2013). In the PGDT program the underrepresentation of women in physics and mathematics (which faculty interviews suggested is a common phenomenon) was more clearly evident with only 3 women out of 28 students (11%) enrolled in Physics compared to 15 out of 33 (46 %) in Biology.<sup>101</sup>

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for both public and private institutions (Yigenzaw, 2007). The policy is gender-neutral, stipulating no gender-sensitive requirements.

<sup>100</sup> While a student may have little say over which band she is tracked into, she has more choice over the specific subject.

<sup>101</sup> Term 2 data.

Several reasons were offered by participants for their choice of subject, revealing adaptive preferences influenced by gendered socialization and internalized societal assumptions about what women are capable of doing:

By the way, most of the females want to join social science subjects. Like when you go to Addis Ababa University technology department, most of them are boys. Girls are afraid to be in physics and math subjects. It's a calculation subject, it is difficult. They feel they will not be good, so they will not join those courses. [Female, Biology PGDT student]

Families don't encourage their girls in math. They say it is too hard and they should take an easier subject. [Female, Mathematics PGDT student]

When I was growing up I wanted to be an artist, I want to draw and paint. But my parents are worried about my future so I enter biology because I was told it is the easiest science. [Female, Biology PGDT student]

The need for tailored academic support programs in a context where women often lack confidence in their own abilities and have negative orientations toward STEM subjects was also made evident in students' accounts. Some reported that the majority of the girls in their programs failed or changed subjects so that they were one of only a handful of females (in some cases the only female) remaining after the first year. Without support, channeling more women into the sciences under the 70:30 policy and into subjects not of their choosing could serve more to constrain their success in HE than increase female participation in these fields.

### **Institutional Response: The Beleaguered Gender Office**

Each public university in Ethiopia is expected to have a central Gender Office which operates under the Office of the President. AAU also has gender offices at the college level overseen by the central gender office.<sup>102</sup> These offices are intended to be

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<sup>102</sup> Gender offices were introduced within the last decade. Originally named the Women's Affairs Office, the Gender Office in AAU was established in 2008. This shift in name reflects, although perhaps not as



“responsible for gender related matters at all campuses and at all academic units of the university” and are mandated to promote “gender equality in undergraduate and graduate programs; support for female students to minimize dropout rates and scale up successes; and gender equality within the university hierarchy” (AAU Gender Office brochure). However, while the potential value of gender offices (usually referred to in the singular as “the Gender Office”) is significant, they currently face severe difficulties such that they remain largely dysfunctional and marginalized on many campuses.

As far as students’ accounts of their undergraduate experiences were concerned, four participants said that they had received help from the Gender Office in the form of tutorials or with financial assistance from a bursary administered by the office. Beyond that, only a quarter of participants mentioned the office without prompting. More than half said they had not visited the Gender Office on their campus. Others had heard about it but had only a vague understanding of its work. A few were dismissive of the office, saying “it is there, but they are not doing that much. The policies speak about women but what they say is not found in practice.” (Female, Physics PGDT student)

University restructuring and attendant budget cuts have posed a tremendous challenge to the functioning of the Gender Office. While several universities have opened a Gender Office, the government has allocated no annual budget for them, leaving universities to finance the offices from their miniscule internal revenue (Molla, 2013). At the time of this research, several Gender Office staff at AAU had either left their positions to find better paying work or had been assigned to other positions, with the

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intended, a shift in the offices’ work from serving women specifically to promoting equity for a variety of student groups.

vacancies created proving difficult to fill.<sup>103</sup> Of the ten colleges at the university, only four had a Gender Office representative, some without a physical space from which to work and most without support staff.<sup>104</sup>

Pressure on the Gender Office to raise its own funds for programs contributed to its operations taking on the nature of a struggling NGO. The conditionality of such funding, at least as far as the AAU central office was concerned, meant that it was not always able to determine its own priorities and was stretched thin coordinating a number of piecemeal projects. Some of these projects extended beyond the university, for example involving mentoring programs at nearby secondary schools. Funds for scholarships and financial aid came from an assortment of NGOs and individual donors, each with their own stipulations.

Gender offices also face at times a hostile institutional environment, requiring them to navigate a minefield of biases and sensitivities among university staff. When I asked the AAU director about their biggest challenges she said:

Raising awareness and changing attitudes is often the most challenging thing. Some university offices believe this work is “special”—that we are not a part of the university but we are a separate institute or something fighting for women’s rights and blaming others. For example, the Registrar’s Office resists our efforts to have records reviewed when a female student is facing dismissal saying “who are they [the Gender Office] to force us to do this or that.” We are sometimes called the “Office of Judgment.

Interviews with faculty members in the CoE&BS revealed the view, on the one hand, that all things pertaining to gender and female students is the sole purview of the

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<sup>103</sup> Several gender “experts” working in the offices were men and were, according to the director, very dedicated but the office also has a counseling component to its work and the director was not sure that women felt comfortable to speak to male staff about all their problems.

<sup>104</sup> In the CoE&BS at AAU, the gender officer was a member of faculty, as is commonly the case, and had recently been appointed as Associate Dean so that the position remained vacant. A gender expert hired in the middle of the semester, a male MA graduate in social work, left the position after less than two months for better-paying employment with an NGO.

Gender Office and, on the other hand, considerable skepticism about the ability of the office to serve students. Faculty comments also highlighted fundamental problems in approach and the lack of substantive support:

The Gender Office faces the same problem as the Women's Affairs Ministry. On paper everything is okay, the policies are there but when it comes to the practice it does not work . . . it is mostly slogans. [Male, AAU CoE&BS faculty member]

In some places where the Gender Offices are organized, there are some good experiences but then all of a sudden that experience dies out. It is not sustained. . . . Also, it is usually a kind of remedial action that they undertake, but then these are reported as if they are major steps. [Male, AAU CoE&BS faculty member]

While insightful, these critiques fed a more general cynicism about the intentions behind equity-related interventions as being “just political.” Among some there appeared to be a kind of backlash or fatigue over rhetoric and policy focused on women. This led a few faculty interviewed, including some of those involved with the work of the Gender Office, to argue that women alone should not be the focus of programs. In this regard, a common argument made was that “gender is not synonymous with women,” that there is need to be more “balanced,” and “less radical” (AAU faculty interview).<sup>105</sup> The shift from “women” to “gender” through this logic is meant to compensate for an “excessive” focus on women and to open the door for the inclusion of men. This inclusion of men, however, is as beneficiaries of programs not as partners in eliminating gender injustice. It fits neatly with an understanding of equality as equal distribution, while ignoring unequal

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<sup>105</sup> This was echoed in a practicum report written by a Gender Studies graduate student on her recent internship with the central gender office at AAU (A., 2014).<sup>105</sup> In this report, the graduate intern contends that “even if female students need more support since they are discriminated and suppressed, the Gender Office must not serve female students only” (p.9). She argues that by administering female-only scholarships “the Gender Office creates discrimination between male and female students” (p.16). Female-only trainings are similarly dismissed as discriminatory, and she argues that the office should work to reduce the dropout rate for all students. She explains that “gender” refers to both women and men and that by excluding men the Gender Office is following “a radical feminist ideology” (p.18).

power relations and the workings of gender as a system of social stratification. This also mirrors a kind of backlash against girls' education efforts that has emerged in other contexts on the African continent.<sup>106</sup>

The dissipation in focus on women in the work of the AAU Gender Office was also reflected in the addition of disability rights to the office's mandate and the view that the office should promote equity more generally. Increasingly programs such as tutorials and orientation workshops organized by AAU Gender Offices are open to all students. The director of the central office, however, was wary of this approach and conscious that those working within and supporting the Gender Office have different, sometimes inconsistent, understandings of its role. She observed with respect to the reduction of programs focusing on women specifically that there is sometimes a "denial of the disadvantages female students face and their need for targeted support." She noted that "colleges sometimes oppose it saying women and men are equal here [in the university], given equal chances and support, the girls don't need more."

One area where attention remains focused on women is the problem of sexual harassment. Very few cases are formally reported to the Gender Office at AAU but the office was widely viewed as being the primary agent in the university responsible for addressing this issue. At the time of this research, the AAU Gender Office was involved in the Ministry-led development of an anti-harassment policy and code of conduct for the university which was only that year being instituted. The process for developing this

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<sup>106</sup> Manion, for example, notes a running commentary on the "neglect" of boys and men at the launching of the United Nations Girls Education Initiative in the Gambia in 2007, quoting one government official who suggested that the re-naming of the Girls' Education Unit in that country to the "Gender Education Unit" should go "some way" to tempering the "boys' backlash" against the "over-focus" on girls' education" (2012, p. 241). Similarly, at a 2014 UNESCO conference on education sector responses to early marriage and pregnancy in South Africa, I heard several participating government representatives express that the boys and men are "tired" of all the attention given to females and "they want to know what we will do for them."

policy, however, was a very high level one with limited participation from the wider university community. Several participants at a workshop held at the university (after the policy had already been submitted to the university senate for ratification) expressed severe doubts about the impact of the policy and its effective implementation. Other individuals with whom I spoke expressed a kind of fatigue over the issue of sexual harassment, concluding that “it is not really a problem here anymore,” suggesting a poor support base for the implementation of the policy.

With respect to academic support for female students (as well as students with disabilities) the AAU Gender Office’s main effort was a retention program for (mainly first year) students facing possible academic dismissal.<sup>107</sup> The retention program offered such students a semester of English language and life skills training at the university before they re-entered normal classes. The dropout rate and absenteeism for this program, however, was very high (over 60% in 2013/14) (Gender Office interviews). The two classes I observed were taught by male faculty from the CoE&BS and were very technical in terms of language instruction (referencing terms, for example, that were unfamiliar and difficult for me to understand). Faculty expressed frustration at students’ irregular attendance and failure to complete assignments. While the Gender Office has been endeavoring to improve aspects of the program over time, a fundamental problem with the approach is articulated in the comments made by this faculty member:

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<sup>107</sup> The Gender Office also coordinates a remedial program for female students who have been permanently dismissed because of failure. This is a six month program to offer skills training through the nearby Entoto Technical School. Participants study such courses as hair dressing, surveying, secretarial science. According to the Gender Office Director, many manage to find work, although without some family support even to study for the six months is difficult. Many do not want to go home because, particularly if they are from rural areas, opportunities for continuing their education (through extension courses) or employment are limited. For most, marriage is the only alternative. Most are also ashamed to return home after being dismissed from university.

The support system in the university is very poor for female students. It is problem-based. It is just addressing problems as they happen. For example there may be tutorials but it is given after they fail. Had it been before failure that would be more helpful, more strategic. It is after they experience pain, problem, after they feel that they are female and inferior that we are telling them here we are to help you. I mean, I don't know, the approach itself is somehow negative. [Male, AAU CoE&BS faculty member]

The obstacles discussed here hinder the important role the Gender Office can play in addressing systemic and structural constraints to women's successful participation and full inclusion in HE. At the same time, the limiting environment described also points to why, while gender mainstreaming is important, there is continued need for a dedicated institution to monitor such mainstreaming and to go beyond it so that the multiple injustices experienced by women in HEIs are not ignored in the face of "bigger problems" and fatigue over "too much" attention on women.

On a more promising note, the AAU Gender Office has played a critical supportive role for an emergent student movement on that campus focused on increasing awareness of gender injustice in the university and society at large and on changing attitudes, practices and policies perpetuating gender inequality. This "Yellow Movement," as it is called, was started in 2011 by a dynamic and vocal member of the Law faculty and a group of her students.<sup>108</sup> It now has a large student base within that

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<sup>108</sup> The Yellow Movement campaigns for the elimination of violence against women, holding weekly activism events by way of open-air discussions with fellow students and AAU staff members and participating in radio programs that question gendered norms in Ethiopian society. It also organizes fundraisers to support female students in need of financial assistance and supports efforts of local civil society groups. While still developing its identity and endeavoring to broaden its support base, it has become very well-known, making effective use of social media, and is one of few critical voices raising issues of gender injustice at AAU for debate. In 2014, the gang rape and subsequent death of a Hanna, a high school student in Addis Ababa, became a pivotal case for discussions on violence against women in the city, with the Yellow Movement serving as a key resource for information on the case and debates around it. According to its founders, the "yellow" in the name of the movement symbolizes "the color of the Sun. The rising of the sun is a sign of a new day and hopefully a better day. A day free of fear, violence and gender based limitations." (Yellow Movement Facebook page: [https://www.facebook.com/TheYellowMovementAau/info/?tab=page\\_info](https://www.facebook.com/TheYellowMovementAau/info/?tab=page_info)). As the first initiative of its

faculty and increasingly beyond.<sup>109</sup> This “movement” is significant in part because it is very difficult for collective efforts by students to be allowed to function in universities in Ethiopia where there are strict regulations controlling any group activities that might be construed as political action or for rallying anti-government sentiments. The AAU Gender Office was, however, able to provide institutional support for the Yellow Movement and aid it in obtaining necessary permission from the administration to hold large gatherings and engage students in debates on gender issues such as biases about women’s intellectual abilities, the roles they should play and their objectification. While garnering significant attention and stimulating discussion among students and university staff alike, a major problem this movement faces—confirmed by two of its founding members with whom I conducted interviews—is widening its base to include students from rural and low-income backgrounds. Many of those originally involved (female and male students) were graduates of a few private high schools in Addis Ababa and the movement has struggled, despite its broad message, to shake off its elitist image and to learn how to effectively engage with the full diversity of students on the campus. This is something the Gender Office could support further and help extend to other campuses, if it has adequate resources, autonomy and strong leadership.

### **Discussion: The Unequal Conversion of HE Opportunities**

The above sections have presented, in depth, dominant themes emerging from participants’ accounts of their undergraduate experiences. While participants in this study

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kind in AAU, the Yellow Movement has garnered widespread attention from students and faculty, although it remains driven largely by those in the law school.

<sup>109</sup> At time of interviews, there were efforts underway by the Yellow Movement to engage students in other departments and AAU campuses with a plan to accompany such efforts into other university campuses as well.

were not specifically asked about capabilities or functionings they valued, their accounts point to certain capabilities that are critical because they either assisted them when enhanced or created barriers when limited and under-developed. Drawing on the work of researchers (Walker, 2006a, 2006b; Wilson-Strydom, 2012) who have identified capabilities for HE participation in other contexts, Table 7 below presents those capabilities which emerged as important in this study.<sup>110</sup> The names and definitions (first and second columns in Table 7) are adopted from those used by Walker and Wilson-Strydom, but the selection of capabilities and evidence for their salience (third column) come from the data collected for this study and reflect the specificities of this context. So, for example, while Wilson-Strydom did not find bodily integrity to be of notable significance in her South African HE study (which did not focus on women) and did not utilize the capability of voice, both of these were found to be critical for women in the Ethiopian context. The capabilities listed in Table 7 are then referenced in the discussion of constraints, and women's responses to them, which follows.

### **Critical HE Capabilities**

The capabilities listed below—autonomy; knowledge and imagination; learning disposition; social relations and networks; respect, dignity and recognition; emotional integrity; bodily integrity and health; language competence and confidence; and voice—are important in two respects. In one respect, they are capabilities critical to successful

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<sup>110</sup> It is important to emphasize that the aim here is not to generate a comprehensive capabilities list for participation in or transition to higher education in Ethiopia, as undertaken by Walker (2006) and Wilson-Strydom (2012) elsewhere. The development of such a list following the five-step process suggested by Robeyns (2005) is beyond the scope of this study and should include broad, participatory dialogue backed by the MoE and institutions concerned. What is offered here serves as a place to start and illustrates the value of undertaking the development of a multi-faceted index (to which I return in the final chapter) by which to assess gender equality in HEIs and through the stages of teacher education and in-service teaching.



participation in HE. Such successful participation includes the functionings of completing the first year of university and demonstrating educational resilience,<sup>111</sup> being recognized as a peer with others, and ultimately graduating with a bachelor's degree. At the same time, these capabilities are among those that should be developed *through* participation in HE and are important for future well-being and professional engagement, again with primary attention to ways in which women are currently disadvantaged (Walker, 2006b, 2007). Some of the ways in which these capabilities are important with respect to the well-being and agency freedoms of women as teacher trainees and teachers are addressed in subsequent chapters.

As described in Chapter 3, capabilities are understood here both as substantive freedoms (opportunities) and also as skills and capacities (Walker, 2006a), internal powers (Nussbaum, 2000) or s-capabilities (“skills” or “substantive” capabilities, Gasper, 1997) that can be fostered given a supportive environment. Moreover, as Walker notes:

... in combining gender equality capabilities with education capabilities in a multidimensional list in which all capabilities matter, we demonstrate that gender equality and education equality are interwoven, one within the other. We cannot then have a quality education that is also not an equality education” (2007, p. 179).

**Table 7: Emergent List of Capabilities to be Developed Through HE and Critical to Successful Participation of Women in HE in Ethiopia**

Capability	Definition	Examples of how capability featured in participant accounts <sup>112</sup>
<i>I. Autonomy</i>	Having choices and being able to acquire information on which to make choices. Being able to think critically and independently, to	Constrained ability to choose where to study and what field to study. Adaptation of course preferences to others' biased advice and assumptions about women's abilities. Limited

<sup>111</sup> Wilson-Strydom defines *educational resilience*, which she considers the over-all desired outcome with respect to transition to university, as including successfully navigating the transition from secondary school to university within individual life contexts, negotiating risk, persevering academically, and being responsive to educational opportunities and adaptive constraints, as well as having aspirations and hopes for a successful university career (p. 251).

<sup>112</sup> Some of the points noted here relate to the absence of these capabilities and constraints to their development, which is discussed more fully in the next section.

	reflect, to make well-reasoned, intellectually acute and socially responsible choices, to take active ownership of one's learning and "to construct a personal life project in an uncertain world" (Walker, 2006) (tied to having one's own aspirations and hopes, and not settling for being second or third best).	opportunities for participating in knowledge-construction and application, or to critically reflect on one's learning and context as a result of teacher-centered pedagogy and focus on knowledge (information) transmission.  Valuation of autonomy shown in women contesting social norms and familial expectations; prioritizing studies over marriage; exercising good judgement in choosing friends and how to spend time; asserting right to freedom of choice in dress and movement; and participation in collective movements for change (albeit very limited among women of poor and rural backgrounds).
2. <i>Knowledge and imagination</i>	Having the academic grounding needed to be able to gain knowledge of relevant university subjects and develop understanding of the various methods of inquiry in different subject areas. Understanding the disciplinary conventions that underpin what counts as knowledge and informs how knowledge is constructed ("epistemological access," Morrow, 2010). Being able to use critical thinking and imagination to identify and comprehend multiple perspectives.	Overly-challenging first-year coursework without adequate support; not being taught how to work with multiple sources and online materials. Having to rely heavily on other students to make sense of assignments, seeking out seniors or others as "translators." Institutional culture and educational arrangement geared towards "weeding out" students who "don't belong" in HE.
3. <i>Learning disposition</i>	Being able to have curiosity and desire for learning. Having the skills required for university study. Having confidence in one's ability to learn. Being an active inquirer. Strongly supports epistemological access.	Desire and will to learn strongly developed; evidenced in making it to university and aspirations to continue studies despite challenges. However, time-management, study skills, academic writing, research and referencing (even note-taking) skills, and different cognitive demands such as formulating an argument or critique and applying theory, not taught or well-developed. Students having to learn alone how much emphasis to put on different courses and assignments, how to contend with gendered expectations about time commitment in social relationships, and how to manage one's own schedule for the first time.
4. <i>Social relations and social networks</i>	Being able to form networks of friendship, trust and belonging for learning, support and leisure. Being able to participate in a group for learning, working with others to solve problems or tasks and to respond to human need (and	Strongly developed and highly valued with respect to friendships among peers. Opportunity to meet students of different ethnicities and religions, to freely socialize beyond one's family, to be exposed to different views, appreciated by many as a freedom afforded by university.

	injustice).	<p>Value of this capability increased by the absence of other support structures within the university environment; friendships often sole emotional, material and academic support. High costs for those with few friends or in relationships not characterized by reciprocity and trust. Some social relationships negative to development of a positive learning disposition. “True” friendship contrasted with relationships in which feel “used” and misunderstood (e.g., male students expecting sexual favors in exchange for academic help or other support).</p> <p>Serious constraints to developing relationships of trust with male faculty and staff. Adoption of a distancing strategy undermining other capabilities (e.g., knowledge, learning disposition and voice).</p>
5. <i>Respect, dignity and recognition</i>	<p>One dimension relates to how the individual is treated by others. This includes being treated with dignity, not being diminished or devalued because of one’s gender (or class, ethnicity, religion, etc.). Being free from bias and discrimination and having the opportunity to function as a peer or equal.</p> <p>Second dimension has to do with how individual treats others as well as herself. Involves being able to respect oneself and others, being able to show empathy, compassion, fairness and generosity, listening to and considering other person’s points of view, being able to act inclusively and being able to respond to human need and value human diversity.</p> <p>A capability fundamental to achieving gender equality and underpinning all others.</p>	<p>Feeling inferior and out of place in the university because of assumptions about abilities and treatment as a sexual object. Normalization of such discrimination. Pedagogical practices that ignore or silence women and discourage discussion of multiple perspectives. Discourse of mediocrity and failure internalized by students. Lack of gender-sensitivity and failure of some faculty and students to show empathy, fairness or to listen.</p> <p>Deep appreciation by students of faculty who encourage, mentor, believe in them and show respect.</p>
6. <i>Emotional integrity</i>	Not being subject to anxiety or fear which diminishes learning. Having confidence to learn and developing emotions for empathy, awareness (of oneself and others) and discernment.	Feeling overwhelmed, confused and fearful during first year of university. Fear of failing immobilizing and fed by faculty using this as a warning and ill-conceived tool for motivation. Aggravated for female students whose confidence already shaken and for whom stakes are very high given limited alternative opportunities. Threat of sexual harassment inducing fear, anxieties, helplessness, isolation and internalized sense of inferiority. Avoidance of confrontation with

		authority, endeavoring to take up as small a (physical and auditory) space as possible and endeavoring to hide emotions as a response.
<b>7. Bodily integrity and health</b>	Safety from all verbal and physical harassment in the HEI environment. Having access to sanitary and health living conditions. (Primarily an o-capability)	Threat and incidence of sexual harassment experienced as severe constraint. Prioritizing physical safety (and emotional integrity) over other capabilities (e.g., knowledge, voice and autonomy) through distancing strategy. Exposure to sexually-transmitted disease heightened in environment of transactional sex. Particular challenges for female students of limited physical security of campuses, lack of water and sanitation, extreme heat and prevalence of disease.
<b>8. Language competence and confidence</b>	Being able to understand, read, write and speak confidently in the language of instruction.	Lack of English-language fluency and confidence a significant disadvantage undermining other s-capabilities. Learning and engagement also constrained by limited Amharic knowledge (as fallback language of instruction). Fears and anxieties about speaking up in classroom settings. Judgements about intelligence and academic capacity because of language aggravating gender biases.  Recognition of importance evident in the AAU Gender Office's focus on English language training as part of their retention, but approach flawed.
<b>9. Voice</b>	Having the capacity to debate, to contest, to inquire and participate critically, to speak out. Involves not being silenced through pedagogy, power relations or harassment or be excluded from the curriculum. Is aided practically by language competence and confidence but is far more. Involves substantive freedoms from silencing and exclusion and skills and capacities, including being able to speak confidently in public and to those in authority and to articulate one's needs, that promote such freedoms. Supports and accelerates autonomy	Female voices accepted and recognized only when compliant, accommodating and even child-like rather than critical or assertive. Pedagogies, faculty expectations and misuse of power that dismiss and silence women's participation. Adoption of distancing strategy in response to harassment that limits voice and speaking to authority.  Prevailing assumption that women will automatically acquire voice and other capabilities through enrollment in HE institutions. <sup>113</sup>  To be able to speak up and speak back and to speak with a powerful collective voice central to what the Yellow Movement seeks to enhance but not yet effective in reaching all women.

<sup>113</sup> Leadership was not a focus of this study and so not addressed directly but it can be seen that many of the capabilities listed above would support opportunities for women to take more leadership roles within the HE environment, in their professions and in wider society, and should receive greater attention as a valued, and purposefully cultivated, outcome of HE. Amongst the capabilities discussed here that would support women's participation in leadership are autonomy, respect, dignity and recognition, (relevant) social networks, language competence and confidence and voice.

	and aspiration of women. Has both an individual and collective dimension that involves being able to join one's voice with that of others, to hear others' voices and to speak against injustice.	
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Source: Capability names and definitions drawn from lists developed by Walker 2006a (p.128-129) & 2006b (p.179-180) and Wilson-Strydom, 2012 (p. 250-251). Examples (third column) derived from field data collected for this study.<sup>114</sup>

It is important to stress that these capabilities are ones that educational institutions should aid students in developing and are not markers for individual or group failing. In other words, this is not a list of the ways in which women students are inherently deficient and need “remedying” but rather the areas in which universities have failed to support capability development of students and where social and institutional constraints have disadvantaged women.<sup>115</sup> This reveals how on-the-side assertiveness training workshops and isolated academic tutorials are an inadequate response. What is needed is a coherent and systematic approach to addressing constraints and supporting capability development; an approach that recognizes gender inequality in HE as far more than an issue of access, representation or even graduation rates (see also Chapter 10).

<sup>114</sup> Wilson-Strydom found bodily integrity not to be of great significance in her study, which was not focused on gender. It is, however, in my study and is included here as it is Walker's list. Also included is autonomy (which incorporates “practical reason” as specified by Wilson-Strydom) and voice because of the emphasis here on gender equality in combination with educational capabilities, as elaborated below.

<sup>115</sup> To design programs and interventions to support students in the development of these capabilities requires drawing on additional educational theories. For example, in having identified the capability of knowledge, additional theories are needed to deepen understanding of this capability and how it can be fostered, including those that address student engagement (2006), delineate strategies to truly allow female students to access high status knowledge (e.g., Paechter (2003) and Yates (2003), references in Walker, 2006), and that speak to the relationship between teacher, learner and knowledge construction (e.g., Freire (1972)). This discussion, however, simply focuses on what emerged as important in the accounts of women students (in this case recent women graduates enrolled in a teacher education program). In subsequent chapters, this study will also address how the under-development and diminishment of these capabilities is perpetuated during teacher education and continues to act as an obstacle to women as teachers.

## **Conversion Factors and the Role of Context in Shaping HE Inequalities**

This section discusses the conversion factors that impact the extent to which women are able to develop the critical capabilities described above. Certain behaviors and practices rooted in gender as a system of stratification (Risman, 2007) emerged as the most prominent social conversion factor, intersecting with other factors to constrain women's ability to successfully participate in and develop capabilities through university study.

**Sexual harassment and gender bias** against women emerged as factors most directly diminishing women's capability to succeed or even stay in university and to participate with men as full partners in social interaction. This confirms that the experience of formal education in such instances can actually contribute to capability deprivation (Unterhalter, 2003). Even though a female student may work as hard, or harder than, male peers and perform as well, she may be denied her rightful grade because of the abuse of power by a male faculty member.<sup>116</sup> If she is not academically dismissed, the psychological and emotional effect of such an experience may further constrain her ability to engage in study and leave her feeling disempowered.

While some participants who faced sexual harassment viewed their experience as an isolated incident, others recognized it as part of a wider exercise of domination but still felt impotent to do much about it. This reflects what McNay (2008) refers to as diminished "anticipatory dispositions" and lends support to the conclusion reached by

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<sup>116</sup> Even if one takes at face value the "opportunity" within the existing gender order for a woman to improve her academic standing or to get a pass by offering a lecturer sexual favors in return for grades it is obvious that this does not result in enhanced well-being as it is likely emotionally and psychologically debilitating and a host of academic competencies that should be developed through university study such as substantive knowledge, writing and analytic skills and so forth are not developed, likely limiting the capability to engage in future professional work among other things. The ability to participate in HE as a peer is also severely compromised.

Molla and Cuthbert (2014) that “women in Ethiopian HE are profoundly ‘misrecognised’ and come to internalize this, risking the misrecognition of themselves as valid actors in this space” (p. 760). The prevailing threat and seemingly ongoing occurrence of sexual harassment in Ethiopian HEIs, thus constrains many capabilities important for successful university participation, including respect and recognition, bodily and emotional integrity, autonomy and voice, as well as learning disposition and knowledge.

As was described, a way in which sexual harassment functions as a constraint is in producing a threat severe enough to evoke an adaptive response such as the *distancing strategy*. Ample research has shown that, in general, the more contact students have with their lecturers the better. Whether it is to discuss assignments, get feedback on performance, talk about career plans, seek advice on research or discuss other concerns, lecturers can potentially serve as role models, mentors, and guides for lifelong learning (Chickering & Gamson (1987).<sup>117</sup> This assumes that such a relationship is not exploitative. However, in a context where it sometimes is and widespread fear exists, female students are more often than not deprived of the potential benefits of faculty-student interaction because they stay away. In addition, they are more likely to develop preference for not running for leadership positions and keeping a low profile. The limited number of female faculty, and the excessive burden on those who are there, further limits opportunity for female students.<sup>118</sup> Such a strategy involves adapting to constraint by privileging protection of one’s basic bodily and emotional integrity over, for example,

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<sup>117</sup> Chickering and Gamson (1987) even identify frequent student-faculty contact in and outside of classes as “the most important factor in student motivation and involvement” (cited in Wilson-Strydom, p. 48).

<sup>118</sup> Arguably in the current HE context, in which faculty are often preoccupied with research endeavors and consultancies outside their teaching duties and student numbers have greatly increased, male students do not have much opportunity for faculty interaction either. But in the face of perceived threat of sexual harassment, men’s ability to benefit from what interactions are possible is greater than that for females and students’ positive accounts when such relationships do exist verify their value.

knowledge. That women are forced to make such a choice, when all such capabilities should be safeguarded and developed, is an injustice and mechanism for the perpetuation of inequality.

Despite such constraints, some participants exercised agency in the form of resistance, for example in choosing to dress how they wished and in speaking up against such actions despite potential risk to their well-being. Others exercised autonomy and voice in making decisions in their personal lives, such as delaying marriage and resisting family pressures, which demonstrated the enhanced agency that a university education enables, even while they faced constraining factors such as sexual harassment in that same context. The support of the Gender Office and collective action such as that fostered by the Yellow Movement are vitally important for enhancing such agency and safeguarding the well-being of women acting to disrupt the prevailing gender order. They are, however, largely absent from most campuses and where they are present are greatly constrained in addressing disadvantage experienced by women.

Gender biases about what women are capable of as students, how it is that they got their high marks, what it means that they dress this way or that, similarly constrain their ability to participate as peers in HEIs even though they occupy the same classroom space and have access to the same resources. The negative stereotypes and invisibility of women in this space function as a kind of cultural domination which confines them “to a nature which is often attached in some way to their bodies, and which, thus, cannot easily be denied” (Young, 1990, p.59). Furthermore, when the unwitting response to prejudice is internalization of such views and acceptance of mediocrity—just being satisfied with getting through—female students’ ability to successfully participate in university is



further hampered. While most directly linked to the capability of respect, dignity and recognition, such gender biases and internalization of them has negative implications for all the capabilities listed above.

Two prominent social conversion factors intersecting with gender in this study were **income-level (or socio-economic background more broadly) and rural upbringing.**<sup>119</sup> The quality of schooling received and exposure to extra-curricular or outside school opportunities, as well as educational support offered by parents, had considerable bearing on the skills and capacities developed prior to entering university. In university, as discussed previously, those with limited family support and personal resources expressed experiencing anxieties over finances. This was more pronounced for women because, in part, of the greater costs for toiletries and other basic necessities and the emphasis placed on appearance in the social judgment of them. When basic survival through university was at stake, the pressure was also greater for women because they generally saw a very dim future for themselves without a university education and the need to prove to their families that the investment in them was worth it. Responses to this constraint included, for some, dependence on relationships with men, with implications for the development of autonomy and, in some cases, emotional and bodily integrity. Such a route was, however, resisted by many of the participants in this study who, despite facing such difficulties, sought to find other ways to meet their material needs.

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<sup>119</sup> In this study neither ethnicity nor religion featured prominently. Study participants did make reference to growing tensions around ethnicity, for example among politically-based student groups, and one participant discussed how on her campus past exam papers were shared exclusively among ethnic-based networks. Faculty also discussed the growth of ethnic divisions among themselves. For the most part, however, this did not emerge from accounts of women students' experiences as a factor that directly affected their successful participation in university beyond the issue of language (where Amharic was often used as the fallback language to English). Many participants were assigned to universities outside their own regions and developed social networks with peers of diverse ethnicities and religions. Ethnicity as a social conversion factor and its intersections with gender inequality in the university context, however, merits further study.

Rural upbringing also has implications for access to quality schooling, particularly secondary schooling which until very recently was only available in urban areas (Negash, 2006). It was also associated for study participants with more traditional gender beliefs, norms and roles within households and communities. For reasons described earlier, English language proficiency was more limited for rural, female students. Students from rural areas also faced certain biases in university, which for women intersected with gender stereotypes, and undermined their capability of respect and recognition and their confidence to learn. Such biases veered between two extremes, with rural students either being presumed to be innately very bright and studious to have made it this far and to, therefore, be without need of support (the Ethiopian version of “model students”) or as the beneficiaries of affirmative action policies and, therefore, not as capable as other students (the latter being the most common view of rural women mentioned by study participants). Neither bias is helpful to students in the development of the capabilities needed for successful university participation.

Examination of women’s undergraduate experiences also reveal **educational arrangements** (including pedagogy and learning culture), **university practices and government policies** that disadvantage all students and aggravate the obstacles faced by women from poor and rural backgrounds in particular. Several of these aspects are noted in the third column of the capabilities table present above and include pedagogical practices that fail to balance challenge with adequate support, that view the student as an empty receptacle to be filled and the first year as an opportunity to identify those able to survive from those who are “too weak.” Combined with gender biases and limited academic and psycho-social support, such approaches set many up for failure. The

capabilities of respect and recognition, emotional integrity, and voice, as well as those of knowledge and learning disposition, are diminished in a context where anxieties over failure are strong and discouragement and disrespect by some lecturers left unchecked. Furthermore, the policy of English language instruction and lack of language support also constrained students from being able to communicate with competence and confidence, participate in class and voice opinions, fully utilize available educational and reference materials and be respected, thus limiting epistemological access and further undermining development of critical s-capabilities. These experiences lend weight to the understanding that access to university is far more complex than merely putting more bodies into existing institutions.

HE equity policies narrowly focused on expanding formal access limit the political will, resources and substantive programs needed to ensure parity of participation in and successful development of capabilities through HE for women, as well as other students. Such a focus is bolstered by the view that once in university, students benefit from equal distribution of resources, and, therefore, should all be treated the same. Moreover, in Ethiopia, the main focus is on expanding access through increasing the number of public HEIs and overall student population without attending to quality of education and social justice. This study, thus, confirms through examination of women's lived experiences and practice what Molla (2013) concludes through his policy analysis. Despite the growing number of women entering university, there is inadequate attention directed toward the structural causes behind the limited active participation and low achievement of many female students in the learning process.

The institutional responses which existing policies have provided for have thus far proven inadequate. The affirmative action policy, as already discussed, allows for a small GPA advantage to women but is focused only on disadvantage with respect to admission. The Gender Office, on the other hand, can be seen to have an important role to play in supporting the development of many of the critical capabilities identified in this chapter through its programs for women and its engagement with male students and university staff. It can also play a crucial role in creating an institutional space for collective efforts against gender injustice to flourish in a context where group action is greatly stifled and otherwise not possible. However, in being under-staffed and under-resourced, pulled in many directions, weak in leadership and backing, reactionary rather than proactive, and operating in a context where elements of gender backlash are at play, the Gender Office is severely hindered in going beyond piecemeal efforts to address the manifestations rather than causes of structural inequality and, in many campuses, is largely absent from students' lives. The imbalance between the emphasis placed on the Gender Office's efforts as the university's primary response to gender inequality and the extremely limited resources made available to it reflect a broader political economy of HE reform in which neoliberal concerns trump genuine commitment to gender equity. What could function as an enhancing social factor that addresses to some degree the deep-seated causes of inequality and disadvantages to women from within and outside the university is, thus, effectively limited in its efficacy.

In addition to these social and institutional conversion factors, participants' accounts also addressed various factors which could be categorized as **environmental**, such as poor campus infrastructure, lack of physical security and adequate sanitation and

the impacts of difficult climates where malaria and other diseases are prevalent. These, as the in-depth presentation of themes described, have bearing on women students' lives and point to ways in which what women need are different from what men need (e.g., better toilet facilities, access to clean water and walls around campus, lighting and libraries near dormitories because of the prevalent harassment of women, etc.) and intersect with some of the social constraints already described. While needed inputs have clearly not been provided, these are the kinds of factors that policy-makers and donors are more willing to discuss and direct resources towards because they are less bound up with changing of norms, values and power relations.

Finally, in this discussion I have not addressed **personal conversion factors**, despite the fact that they are often the primary focus of HE policies, which tend to emphasize merit as the basis for educational access and success. Affirmative action policies recognize that reliance on merit, demonstrated through prior academic achievement, is inadequate and seek, albeit in limited ways, to correct for social and economic disadvantage at the point of access. This provision notwithstanding, the general ideology of meritocracy continues to hold sway, placing far greater emphasis on individual agency and achievement than on the structural or social conditions that either support or limit achievement for different groups of people, particularly once granted access to HE.<sup>120</sup> In the same vein, marginalized groups within HEIs such as women tend to be viewed from within a deficit model, understood to be “at risk” because of

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<sup>120</sup> Wilson-Strydom cites an insightful observation by Brennan and Naidoo (2008) that “[A]longside the arrival of mass education we have the growing dominance of a neo-liberal culture emphasizing individual competence and responsibility spreading through society, though more advanced in some societies than others. A meritocratic ideology is central to this culture, bringing with it the message that your problems are your own fault. And similarly, your privileges are all your own achievement” (p.290, cited in Wilson-Strydom, 2012, p.33). In this context, “socioeconomic and gender privilege are coded as academic merit” (Morely & Lugg, 2009, p.55).

supposedly innate deficiencies. The focus of this discussion, however, has been on social and institutional factors that influence why some students, in this case women from low-income and rural backgrounds, are more constrained in converting HE resources and opportunities into valued capabilities and outcomes than others.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has presented findings with respect to the undergraduate university experiences of women who have gone on to train as teachers. Mostly of low-income and rural backgrounds, these women were able to enter university and succeeded in graduating with a bachelor's degree. Not, however, without facing considerable constraints to their participation in university life as equal peers to men and not without an undermining of critical capabilities that, as the chapters to follow will evidence, have implications for their future professional engagement. These women, moreover, are among a very small minority of women who have succeeded in graduating from university in Ethiopia.

This discussion has illustrated the critical insight that an analysis of conversion factors has to offer, which is that, although resources (a place at university, financial support, access to educational materials, room and board, etc.) are important means for allowing participation in university, they are insufficient. A focus on means and redistribution alone does not adequately take into account the diverse lives of students and the impact that their contexts have on their ability to convert their bundle of resources into functionings they have reason to value. What is needed is attending to what can reduce and eliminate constraints on the opportunity and agency freedoms of women students so as to create “institutional conditions of possibility” (Walker, 2006a,

p.3) for them and other students. The findings of this study confirm, in greater depth and with specific focus on constraining factors and key capabilities, what other researchers have concluded (Molla & Cuthbert, 2014; Mulugeta, 2010)—that Ethiopian public universities continue to be especially difficult and discriminatory environments for women, where parity of participation in seriously curtailed.

The findings discussed in this chapter also make a strong case against the “pipeline” argument for why women are underrepresented in university and, therefore, in secondary school teaching. This was a common argument made by AAU faculty and the MoE staff I interviewed. According to this argument, the problem of gender inequality is one of under-representation, which is due to the current pool of qualified female applicants for HE (and by extension teaching) being very small. Usually this is then linked to the poor rates of progress and academic achievements of women at the secondary school level and, so it follows, it is only a matter of time that as more women enter HE and hiring pools for female teachers expand then gender parity will be achieved. This analysis, however, ignores how once in university, women are disadvantaged in their ability to successfully participate in higher education and to develop capabilities that are expected to be gained through HE. This argument, which is premised on the notion that it is just a matter of time for women to “catch up” fails, as Molla and Cuthbert assert, “to take account of the systemic and structural factors which impede the progress of women in the academy. By attributing the problem to a past legacy, pipeline thinking obscures and delays appropriate policy intervention. . . .” (2014, p. 772).

## Chapter 7: Post-Graduate Teaching Diploma (PGDT) Experiences

Chapter 6 addressed the challenges women face during undergraduate studies that result in the loss of potential female candidates for secondary school teaching because they do not graduate with a Bachelor's degree. Of those women who do successfully graduate in fields that might be expected to feed into teaching, such as natural and social sciences and languages, many choose not to go into the occupation despite high unemployment rates among university graduates (Broussard & Tekleselassie, 2012). As noted in Chapter 4, the selection guidelines for the one-year<sup>121</sup> post-graduate teaching diploma (PGDT) program stipulate a 40% admissions quota for women. However, less than 28% of those enrolled in the 2013/14 PGDT program at AAU were women (AAU CoE&BS registrar) and MoE personnel interviewed indicated that the quota was not filled in any of the regions in the country.<sup>122</sup> The focus of this chapter, then, is on those women who do decide to enroll in the full-time PGDT, who they are, what led them to teaching and their experiences during teacher training. It also addresses the views of PGDT faculty and the university toward the program and gender equity.

### Who Are PDGT Students?

It is helpful to begin the discussion of PGDT experiences with a review of basic statistics and demographic characteristics of the students enrolled in the program. There

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<sup>121</sup> The three term course is intended to be offered over the course of an academic year (nine months). Due to bureaucratic delays, the 2013/14 PGDT program actually started late and was closer to seven months in duration rather than the intended nine months.

<sup>122</sup> Several research participants did remember, however, that TV and radio announcements for the PGDT program specifically called for female applicants and they expressed that they were encouraged by this to apply. This would seem to be a useful advertising strategy to maintain.



were 340 students enrolled in the full-time 2013/14 PGDT program at AAU at the start of the program, 94 (27.6%) of whom were women. 21.5% of all students enrolled in the first term of the program dropped out by the second term. The attrition rate for women was slightly higher, with 22.3% of women (21 women) dropping out by the second term compared to 21.1% of men (52 men), so that by the second term there were 73 women enrolled.<sup>123</sup> Table 8 shows the distribution of students across subjects, revealing, as far as the sciences are concerned, a concentration of women in Biology and Chemistry over Mathematics and Physics.<sup>124</sup>

**Table 8: Students Enrolled in First Term of PGDT 2013/2014 at AAU, by Subject and Sex**

Subject	Female (% of subject total)	Male	Subject Total
History	1 (6.25%)	15	16
HPE	2 (9.5%)	19	21
Physics	4 (11.4%)	31	35
Afaan Oromo language	5 (12.2%)	36	41
English language	4 (22.2%)	14	18
Geography	7 (30.4%)	16	23
Civics	11 (30.6%)	25	36
Mathematics	11 (30.6%)	25	36
Amharic language	13 (37.1%)	22	35
Biology	15 (40.5%)	22	37
Chemistry	21 (50%)	21	42
TOTAL enrolled	94 (27.6%)	246 (72.4%)	340 (100%)

Source: AAU registrar, CoE&BS (November, 2013)

The vast majority of PGDT students were between the ages of 22 and 26.

Information obtained from the AAU CoE&BS's Registrar Office indicated that fewer

<sup>123</sup> All of these were voluntary withdrawals as there were no academic dismissals during the program.

<sup>124</sup> The larger number of students in the sciences reflects the 70/30 policy, described earlier, which channels a growing number of students into these fields. History, on the other hand, receives very few students. AAU had no History undergraduate students enrolled in 2012/13 despite it being one of the strongest departments at the university.

than 10% were married.<sup>125</sup> Most were from rural and low to lower-middle income families. The majority of students' parents were farmers, followed in much fewer numbers by other professions such as teacher, merchant and driver. Many of the students had a rural upbringing but the majority had ties to Addis Ababa and registered for the PGDT program in the city (AAU Registrar Office and interviews). Some had immediate family living in Addis Ababa, some attended secondary school in the city even though their parents and siblings lived elsewhere, and others moved to Addis Ababa after graduation. Except for a small number of students coming from and assigned to teach in the neighboring areas of Addis Ababa, in Oromia Region (e.g., in Fiche), the majority of PGDT students in the regular program expected to be assigned to teach in Addis Ababa schools.<sup>126</sup>

Through formal interviews and informal conversation, I asked 58 PGDT students (25 women, 28 men) about their plans for teaching, revealing that close to three-quarters planned to teach for less than 5 years and over half (55%) for less than three years. This is in line with findings of other studies conducted with pre-service teachers in Ethiopia (Deneke et al. 2015, Eshete, 2003, Kassa, 2014). A third of these students, just two months before completion of their training, planned to be doing something other than teaching upon graduation. These were students who either did not intend to teach from the start, having entered the program to learn something as back-up in case other things

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<sup>125</sup>Three female PGDT students interviewed were married, two of them had young children, and all lived off campus. The program director indicated that there were mothers living in the dorms with small children but when students were asked, they said there were none. It is hard to imagine, with four students crammed into each small dorm room, no childcare or child-friendly facilities, how mothers could live in the dormitories with children even if it is permitted. In the next chapter I will discuss the encroaching demands of women's domestic lives, which did emerge in interviews with PGDT students but affected in-service teachers in greater numbers.

<sup>126</sup>This information from the PGDT coordinator was also confirmed through interviews and informal conversations with students.

did not work, or were students who intended to teach when they entered but then changed their minds.<sup>127</sup> Less than a quarter (21%) indicated that they planned to stay in the profession for the long-term (more than 5 years). This tally and the interviews conducted indicated that women PGDT students were slightly less inclined to remain in the profession long-term and were at least as eager as men to leave the profession. It is not clear, however, given the limited data available, if the actual attrition rate for women from teaching is the same or higher than for men.

As earlier noted, 21.5% of students enrolled in the regular PGDT program in the first term had already dropped out by the start of the second term (CoE&BS Registrar Office).<sup>128</sup> As the first term grades were not determined until well into the second term, none of these were academic dismissals. I asked classmates of those who had dropped out why they had done so and the primary reasons reported were that students found a better job (often in the field they graduated in) or they could not afford to be in the program because there was an immediate need to earn whatever money they could to support their family.

One of the unintended consequences of trying to attract more qualified degree-holding students from other disciplines into the teacher education program is that their identification with the profession is very weak. Many participants described how they viewed themselves as graduates of others fields, as chemists or biology graduates, had hoped to work in related industries, labs or other government offices and only entered teaching after no other work had been found. Of the PGDT students I interviewed almost

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<sup>127</sup> As will be discussed in more detail later, several participants described how during their observations in schools and during their practicum they were discouraged by teachers in the schools from pursuing teaching as a profession.

<sup>128</sup> The dropout rate from the PGDT program was only slightly higher for women. 22.3% of women (21 women) registered in Term 1 dropped out by Term 2 compared to 21.1% of men (52 men).

all indicated that they looked for work related to their degree field before entering the PGDT program and several were still looking.

One incentive to work as a teacher for at least a few years was to reduce the amount that must be paid back to the government for university education. As already noted, university students in Ethiopia enter a cost-sharing agreement with the government whereby the cost of tuition, room and board during study is covered by the government but must be repaid by the student after graduation at a subsidized rate or may be forgiven if the graduate remains in government service for the equivalent number of years of university study. For PGDT students to fulfill their obligations under the cost-sharing agreement they must work in a government school for four years (to cover three years of undergraduate study plus one year of teacher education). This incentive to remain in teaching for at least some time is reflected in the fact that most PGDT students indicated they planned to stay in the profession for at least two years but less than five. As it is usually not permitted for students to enroll in another university course (for post-graduate study or to study another field) until cost-sharing obligations for the first degree are fulfilled, some planned to stay on for more than 3 years to complete another degree before leaving.<sup>129</sup>

It should also be noted that almost all the students with whom I spoke intended to teach in government schools. It was widely held that private schools place heavy demands on teachers in terms of hours and labor, which is inadequately compensated for by the somewhat higher salaries. For this reason, and in order to fulfill obligations under

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<sup>129</sup> Views varied, however, as to how strictly repayment was enforced and a couple of research participants had found ways to enroll in extension courses prior to fulfilling their cost-sharing agreement.

the cost-sharing agreement, PGDT students stated preference to teach in government schools upon graduation.<sup>130</sup>

These basic details shed some light on who PGDT students are and the common orientation toward teaching as an interim occupation. In order to provide more detailed insight into the life history of some of the female PGDT students, however, the data from the in-depth interviews conducted are needed. Text Box 1 presents a short profile of four of the female PGDT students who were interviewed, revealing some of the commonalities as well as differences in student backgrounds, attitudes toward the teaching profession and future plans, to which I will return in the sections that follow.

#### **TEXT BOX 1: Four Female PGDT Student Profiles**

**Genet** was born and raised in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. She attended primary school in a rural area near the border with Eritrea where fighting between the two countries made school attendance very difficult for her, especially as a female student. At the end of primary school her family was displaced by the war to another village but she continued to study, attending secondary school in a nearby town. Because it was far from her home she stayed with other female students in a rented room during the week and returned to her family during the weekends. Genet is the youngest daughter and was promised in marriage at the age of seven to a family in her village who paid for her clothes and gave material support to her family. Her sisters were all married after primary school, before the age of 16, but Genet completed grade 12 and was accepted to study mathematics at Addis Ababa University. It was in university that she decided to tell her family and the man to whom she was betrothed that she would not marry him. She insisted that it must be her choice who she marries. Her family was greatly angered by her decision and Genet was cut off from them for some time. She supported herself during university by tutoring. Toward the end of university, Genet met an AAU graduate student who later became her husband. They married after she graduated with her BSc and lived in northern Ethiopia for a year during which time her husband lectured at one of the universities. They then returned to Addis Ababa where he enrolled as a medical student and Genet took up private tutoring while enrolling in the PGDT program. She continues to tutor in the evenings as she is for the time being the main income-earner in the family. At the time of research, she had three young children all under the age of four.

Unlike many of her peers, Genet was assigned her first choice of subject, mathematics, at her preferred university, AAU. She has tutored for several years and has

<sup>130</sup> This general trend was confirmed by the PGDT coordinator and Addis Ababa Education Bureau director.

a strong affinity for teaching. Explaining that she has always wanted to be a teacher, Genet hopes to be able to work in the teaching profession for the long-term but is concerned about her family's financial situation. They currently live in a small rented room and are dependent on her mother-in-law to care for the children. Genet is herself very thin and looks exhausted whenever I meet her. When her husband graduates, even though he will likely work as doctor in a government post (and, therefore, earn limited wages), they hope that together they will make enough to continue in their respective professions.

**Zuriash** was born in a village in the Gurage region where her parents are farmers and where she lived and attended school until the age of twelve. When she completed primary school there was no secondary school within walking distance for her to attend so she moved to Addis Ababa to live with one of her older brothers and his wife until she graduated from Grade 12. Although her parents had no formal schooling, she and her seven brothers all completed at least high school. She is the youngest child and only girl. Her family is Muslim and Zuriash dresses in full hijab. Her first two choices for study at university were Business, followed by Educational Planning and Management but she was assigned to study Geography in a university in the south of the country. She returned to Addis Ababa after graduation, where she has been actively seeking work related to geography but without success. She heard about the PGDT program when it was announced on television and decided to register as she felt it to be better than staying at home. However, Zuriash explained that she is really not keen to teach and is considering pursuing a Masters degree in Geography to specialize in GIS and land surveying or perhaps pursue her initial choice of business through another undergraduate degree. Two of her brothers are successful merchants willing to support her to start extension courses as they too are not keen for her to be a teacher. In the meantime, she continues her job search. Her primary objection to the teaching profession is that it does not pay enough to live on and is not valued by society. She also expresses concern about the lack of discipline and poor behavior of students in schools and thinks that teaching is a lot of work without reward. Nonetheless, Zuriash regularly attends PGDT classes and fulfills all her assignments.

**Meron** was born in the Oromia region of Ethiopia, the youngest of three children, to parents from Addis Ababa. Her father was posted to a civil service position in a small town and her mother worked as a primary school teacher. When Meron was a young child her father passed away and her mother, finding it difficult with three small children to work in a remote town, transferred to Addis Ababa where they lived with her uncle. Her mother continued working as a primary school teacher and Meron completed her secondary education in a government school in Addis Ababa. Meron went on to university and was assigned her third choice of subject, mathematics, in one of the newer and more rural public universities in the south-central part of the country where the conditions were very challenging. Meron re-joined her mother in Addis Ababa in 2013 after graduating as one of only two women in Mathematics from her university. She was not able to find work and so taught for two months at a private primary school before her mother registered her for the PGDT program. At the time of this research, Meron lived with her mother (who was still teaching) and received additional financial support from

her older siblings. Meron did not have a desire to formally enter teaching as she had heard many negative comments about the profession throughout her life and from teachers in her current school. However, her mother, whom she greatly respects, has always had a great love for the profession and convinced her to take the PGDT exam. At the time of interviews, Meron was committed to teaching for a few years. She also felt strongly that to stay at home doing nothing was not an option. Meron came across as someone who was studious and diligent in whatever she undertook. She expressed concern about the negative attitude she perceived among teachers and society in general toward the teaching profession and stated that she wants to do her best as a teacher for as long as she can because her students are the ones who will change Ethiopia for the better.

**Samira** was raised and schooled in Addis Ababa and is the youngest of six children. Her father is a driver and her mother is not formally employed. Samira very much wanted to enter medical school but was assigned Biology as her field of study, which she pursued at a public university in the south of the country. Even though biology is a popular subject among female students, she was one of only three women in her undergraduate class to complete their degree. After graduation she looked for work but could not find anything in her field. Her friend heard about the PGDT program and called her to register with her but Samira was not interested. It was her brother who insisted that she use the opportunity and registered her. She took the exam and was accepted so she started the course. When we met, Samira was also enrolled in her second semester of extension courses in public health, which she viewed as her first choice of field to work in. At the time, she considered teaching as a back-up if nothing else worked out. She was determined not to be a teacher for more than two or three years. Samira exuded confidence and clearly valued her independence. She had a strong sense of humor and when I observed her during her teaching practicum it was obvious that the students liked her. She was one of the few teachers who learned her students' names and within two weeks of practicum teaching seemed to know the strengths and weaknesses of many of her students, actively engaging them during the class. Despite her ease in the classroom and strengths as a teacher, she did not by the end of the PGDT program intend to remain in the teaching profession for long.

What follows now is a presentation and discussion of dominant themes from the full set of interviews and observations conducted in relation to the PGDT program, focusing on the factors that limited the fostering of a stronger and more positive identification with teaching and the development of important professional capabilities. These constraints did not dissuade someone like Genet, whose passion for teaching was unwavering, but they did little to encourage and support Zuriash who came in reluctantly,

or build needed capabilities in Meron, or persuade Samira, who showed great potential as a teacher, to stay with the teaching profession.

### **Faculty Narratives**

#### **Faculty Views about Students**

In contrast to the profiles presented above, which reveal varied and complex student backgrounds and perspectives, a dominant narrative emerged from many of the interviews and conversations with faculty about who PGDT students are and their orientation toward teaching. PGDT students were commonly described by faculty as poor-performing, unmotivated, even opportunistic, and lacking the basic ability to communicate in English. Several of the faculty began their own professional careers as secondary school teachers but did not see in their students a younger version of themselves. Rather, PGDT students were viewed as different from those who had come before, not as committed and less capable.

Faculty remarked that most PGDT students did not actively participate in class, were careless with their assignments and were frequently absent, which they attributed to a lack of motivation and commitment. It was often mentioned, as if it were an individual failing or act of deceit, that students only entered the program because they could not find other employment. It was explained that many students actively sought other work while enrolled in teacher training and some just used the program for room and board in order to pursue employment in the city.



It was also widely believed that even though PGDT students were university graduates, they were low performing students.<sup>131</sup> Limited language competency was frequently raised and used as a signifier for lack of ability to succeed in the university and work environment. One faculty member pulled out assignments from his drawer and said “look, they can’t even write a proper sentence in English” as illustration of a general lack of capacity. Women’s lack of confidence speaking in English and speaking up was viewed as further compounding the situation, as illustrated by this comment—one of the more extreme expressed by a faculty member—in response to my question as to why some female PGDT graduates are teaching in primary schools:

. . . those who are joining this PGDT program are poor performers. If they are poor performers, how can they teach secondary school students? There will be big challenges. By the way, some [PGDT] students are not able to write a proper paragraph. If they are not able to write a proper paragraph how can they teach in English? I know there are certain spaces [quotas] for female teachers, but how can they manage? . . . Our secondary school students are aggressive, so with that submissiveness of female teachers, with that limited academic capacity, how can they teach in secondary schools? [AAU CoE&BS Faculty member]<sup>132</sup>

When asked about the participation of female students in their classes or the PDGT program in general, it was evident that most faculty members had not given the matter much prior thought. Comments varied between “Ah, they are the same as the men. They all have the same problems” to “they are not participating in the class. Only when

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<sup>131</sup> A minority of faculty viewed PGDT students as an improvement on student intakes in the past, “at least now they are university graduates,” but the majority felt the new program makes little difference and introduces its own problems.

<sup>132</sup> This faculty member implied that female PGDT graduates are specifically placed in primary schools by education bureaus or themselves choose primary placements but this appears not to be accurate. According to MoE and Addis Ababa Education Bureau staff, graduates are randomly assigned by lottery to vacant spots in schools in their sub-city. If there are more openings in primary schools, some are placed there. These assignments can be traded among graduates themselves but the interviews I conducted revealed that women moving into primary school teaching in this way were not necessarily choosing primary over secondary but prioritizing other factors such as teaching closer to their home, as was the case with Meron (see next chapter).

they are made to speak do they say something.” One science lecturer with only three women in his class was delighted that his top student was a woman, confessing that he did not expect that the women would “cope up so well.”

A few faculty members were sympathetic with regard to the limited prospects offered by the teaching profession and stated that students are not to be blamed for lack of motivation and interest in teaching. Two of them reported that they tell their students “we know you will leave this profession. At least use your time while teaching to serve your brothers and sisters to the fullest.”<sup>133</sup> The same faculty member expressed the following frustration:

I ask my students during their study to observe schools and talk to teachers. One of my students came to me and said, “I learned many bad things.” What? How? I asked him. He said “the biology teacher I interviewed told me I should be rethinking teaching. It should be the last option.” The teacher discouraged him. What can I do about this? It is not enjoyable or effective when I see that what I am doing and saying is being questioned by students who are asking “what is the point?” The majority of lecturers are also suffering, they lose interest in teaching. [Male, AAU CoE&BS Faculty member]

During observations of PGDT classes, I was similarly struck by ironies such as the eight week course on “The Teacher as Reflective-Practitioner,” in which there were no discussions of the constraints teachers face in employing such an approach in Addis Ababa schools. PGDT classes did not substantively engage with the realities of teachers’ lives or school conditions to help students make sense of why and how such recommended practices may be usefully adopted. Faculty members who sought to reflect

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<sup>133</sup> This approach by faculty can be understood as an adaptive strategy in response to the challenges and contradictions of the work they are tasked with. The evocation of civic duty alone, however, is limited in effect and, while acknowledging current conditions, tends to naturalize them. It also ignores and undermines the position of those who wish to teach for the long term if they can make ends meet and are supported in their efforts.

on their own practices were aware of such contradictions, as the quote above illustrates, and felt frustrated by their inability to adequately address them.

### **Faculty Views about the PGDT Program**

During interviews, several faculty members focused their comments on reviewing the pros and cons of the PGDT program compared to previous modalities of teacher education. Many felt a teacher education program that is integrated with subject content at the undergraduate level is preferable. Others thought a post-graduate program, accepting recent graduates with strong subject knowledge that focuses on pedagogy is better. Indeed, there have been heated and ongoing debates in the department for several years on these and related issues (faculty interviews). Such commentary was focused, however, on the modality and mechanics of the provision of teacher education, aspects in which the Education faculty felt they had expertise and something to say.

This stood in contrast and perhaps was in response to what I perceived as a general feeling of impotence on the part of faculty to effect broader change. This feeling was aggravated by the introduction of the PGDT program which, from selection of candidates to development of content, is fully directed by the MoE. Despite guidelines from the MoE that emphasize regular reflection on and adaptation of teacher education practices in the context of the PGDT,<sup>134</sup> the CoE&BS and most faculty viewed their role primarily in terms of delivering a predeveloped program.

Several faculty members reminisced about past years when the department was “more vital” and more centrally involved in the development of and decisions about

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<sup>134</sup> 2013 memo from the MoE to university administrators of the PGDT program. Copy shared with me by AAU PGDT coordinator.

teacher education for secondary school teachers.<sup>135</sup> Many also felt fatigued by the constant changes in policies and programs, suspecting that before the department has adjusted there would likely be another set of changes. I was left with the sense that many faculty were simply going through the motions, enacting a kind of performance. With pressing demands from consultancies to supplement their limited government salaries and research to advance academic careers, there was no shortage of other tasks to preoccupy faculty.

### **Faculty Views on Advancing Gender Equality**

In interviews with faculty, I also sought to explore how the role of teacher education in enhancing women's participation in the teaching profession was understood and undertaken through teacher education. Interviews revealed that most faculty viewed gender equality as having already been addressed through the PGDT selection guidelines, which includes a quota for the number of women admitted. It was otherwise not an issue, according to what faculty members reported, that received much attention in college-level discussions. In part, this reflects a narrow understanding of gender equality in terms only of formal access but is also an extension of the weak engagement of faculty in the PGDT program.

With respect to ensuring full participation of women once in the PGDT program itself, it was generally felt by faculty that additional or targeted support was not necessary. At the same time, some of the faculty members observed that female students in the PGDT program tended to participate less than in other AAU classes, seemed to

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<sup>135</sup> A few faculty members were working closely with the MoE as consultants and were involved in the development of the PGDT program but in an individual capacity. Despite occasional meetings between MoE and university colleges of education, several faculty felt that they had little say in effecting broader changes in the system.

have less confidence speaking in public and were reticent to use English, to which the response was usually to call on them to speak up in class. Even though faculty acknowledged that lack of language competence and confidence continues to be a problem for women as they enter classroom teaching and reinforces student and administrator views about their lack of capacity, very few suggested that this should be addressed during teacher training.

In terms of what the PGDT program may contribute for women's future participation in the teaching profession, enhancing gender-responsive teaching practices or questioning the gender order in schools, were not aspects faculty or students were thinking about. While the curriculum has spaces in which gender equity in the classroom and promoting equality in society can be discussed, for example in the modules on inclusive and multicultural education, it varied considerably between lecturers as to the extent to which such sections were given emphasis. In general, discussions were limited and few examples provided related to actual situations teachers might face in classrooms and schools. Moreover, there was no discussion of what goes on beyond the classroom in the wider school context or the potential role of teachers and schools in addressing prevailing gender norms. The program, and education system as a whole, was viewed by faculty as having so many problems and to be under such an interminable state of reform that this was the least concern. As one faculty member remarked, "for everyone it is just about surviving day to day."

As already noted, several faculty held prejudicial views about the capacity of PGDT students, particularly women, and were skeptical as to what could be achieved through the program. This was sometimes expressed in relation to the length of the

program. Teacher educators now have only one academic year (nine months or less) with student teachers (in contrast to three years when a Bachelor's degree in Teacher Education was offered) and many felt this was too short a time to develop skills or change attitudes previously developed. There were a few faculty members, however, who were troubled by the abdication of responsibility this perspective entailed and argued that more needs to be done at an institutional level. This was expressed by one faculty member as follows:

Yeah, but even after they [female students] come here they can be supported. . . . We can do more. Because if they graduate and they continue this way, they are in no position to inspire girls when they teach. So we have to mobilize them to come out, to develop that confidence that they can teach, really teach their students to become something. So even here, in this PGDT program, we have a task to support them. This is change that is needed and a change cannot be done at an individual level alone. It should be at the institutional level, as part of the department program. So at all levels we need to have the agenda. Whoever reaches here, we at least have them for nine months. We have to do something. [Male, AAU CoE&BS Faculty member]

### **Student Narratives**

#### **Student Experiences of the PGDT Program and Views about Faculty**

Students described a variety of faculty practices they had noticed which reflected low expectations of them and lack of faculty interest in the PGDT program. These practices were confirmed by my own observations. They included faculty trading in favors with colleagues to get out of teaching PGDT courses, prioritizing other commitments, such as consultancy work, resulting in frequent cancelation of classes<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> In the middle of the second term, the majority of PGDT faculty left campus to conduct field work for a large NGO project, cancelling classes for two weeks. It was to my advantage for conducting interviews as students had nothing else to do but the loss of two weeks out of an eight week term that already started later than anticipated and felt rushed caused anger among many students.

and not preparing adequately for teaching so that classes of two to three hours comprised listening to a lecturer read off MoE-prepared module notes. Students interpreted this as a form of disrespect toward them:

Some of the teachers they didn't respect us. They use lecture method the *whole* class. It's *so* boring. I'm serious. It gives opportunity for only the lecturers. You don't develop any new ideas, you don't express your feeling. [Female, Biology PGDT student; emphasis in the original]

While students noted that AAU faculty members were very knowledgeable and well-qualified, they also remarked that some lecturers demonstrated an air of superiority, making them feel as if they should not be bothering them with questions. In general, I observed the contact between faculty and PGDT students outside the classroom to be minimal as most faculty members had few office hours and students were regularly referred to the PGDT coordinator with questions about the program.<sup>137</sup>

The fast pace and superficial way in which course content was often covered, compounded by frequent cancellation of classes, was also raised by students as a constraint on their learning. The rapidity with which course material was covered compounded the language difficulties experienced by students, seriously limiting their learning and engagement, as expressed by this female student:

. . . the teachers think that we understand them very well, but we are having a difficult time with English. . . . So for me life has become translating English into Amharic, Amharic into English from the dictionary. . . . If all the subjects were in our language, I thought to myself what kind of stage we could have reached! Most of us, especially women, we are not good with English language. Therefore, we are beginning to say, "Is this what education is all about?" It is not fair to be labeled as not doing well in your education just because of language. [Female, Amharic PGDT student, translated from Amharic]

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<sup>137</sup> While female students expressed feeling safer on the AAU campus and were not aware of any instances of sexual harassment during the PGDT program, the distancing strategy was still followed by several participants who stated that they would not go to ask lecturers questions outside of class or would go in groups if they had to address any administrative issues.

Not all faculty members were inattentive to their teaching. For example, in three of the ten classes I observed, the faculty member thoughtfully arranged the class content to ensure participation through a combination of group work, calling on students, engaging them in discussion of the content of their presentations and so forth. However, even in these classes there were many opportunities where the discussion and learning could have been deepened and contextualized. The content of PGDT lectures in general tended to be very abstract with few concrete teaching examples and use of terminology not easily accessible to students. Every PGDT student interviewed said that they wanted more emphasis on the practical and pedagogical aspects of teaching, not a reiteration at tedium of material covered in their undergraduate courses.

Problems with program coordination were also considerable. The program went through two coordinators in its first year, both of whom described receiving inadequate administrative resources and institutional support. Students were moved from a remote campus the first term because of lack of dorm space into a newly built dormitory near the main Sidist Kilo campus in the second term but were without water and proper cleaning materials for several weeks, which proved particularly challenging for female students, and no bed frames or other furniture at all. The first program coordinator, who resigned from his post, viewed these problems as a “betrayal of the trust placed in the university.” In half the classes I observed, the first part of the class was spent trying to find an empty room because the assigned space had been double-booked, reinforcing the message that there was literally “no space” in the university for PGDT students.

Students were also disgruntled about mismanagement of expectations regarding financial support (including whether they would receive any kind of stipend and whether



they had to sign a cost-sharing agreement) and by delays in provision of funds (e.g., to students not receiving room and board). Students commented that family support was more limited than during their undergraduate studies because as university graduates they were expected to be financially independent. Some (mostly male) students were very vocal with their complaints, several female students said that they did not want to make a fuss or go to lecturers all the time. This account expresses a common female student perspective:

. . . [The lecturers] they say “here are the materials, now go and copy”. But most of the students don’t have support from their families to pay for copies. . . . And the lecturers are not cooperative, when we told them these are our problems, we cannot afford this by ourselves. “So go and ask the Ministry,” that’s just what they tell us. . . . They feel they are higher than us. It’s just difficult. Especially for me, I don’t want to go around there, because the lecturers might say things that are not appropriate.<sup>138</sup> [Female, Mathematics PGDT student]

Because of the failure to provide an orientation, students explained that they did not have a clear sense of what expectations there were of them or what the PGDT program entailed. Information about the practicum and other aspects of the program were conveyed late. There was no graduation or closing ceremony arranged either, reinforcing the impression held by some students that the administration “just want us to be gone” (Female, Geography PGDT student). The opportunity to foster group camaraderie or a collective sense of pride as program participants through such events, which could have contributed to the development of a positive teacher identity, was thus lost.

Despite the various problems, more than half the students interviewed expressed that the PGDT program was valuable, introducing aspects of pedagogy they believed

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<sup>138</sup> In my class observations, I frequently saw students copying module notes by hand during the lecture – often for another class—from a photocopied set that was in circulation. On a couple of occasions a student engaged in this way was called on by the lecturer to answer a question and clearly had no idea what was going on in the class.

would be very useful to them as teachers, even if they felt they could have been taught more. As one student expressed, “the program’s benefit outweighs the difficulties we sustained” (Female, Chemistry PGDT student). This appreciation on the part of students for the program itself, which revealed what they believed to be its potential as much as what they actually experienced, was not reflected in faculty narratives, however. The latter focused on how students generally do not value the program.

### **Student Views of the Practicum: When Practice Does Not Make Perfect**

In addition to formal courses, an important component of teacher education in Ethiopia, as elsewhere, is supposed to be “the integration of theory and practice.” This is a theme receiving lengthy attention in the documents supporting the PGDT program (see MoE, 2011b). Moreover, the official PGDT guidelines stipulate that students should have ongoing observations in schools<sup>139</sup> but this was inconsistently undertaken. Furthermore, the practicum—the main extended student-teaching experience that is intended to be one month in duration—amounted to less than three weeks because of poor scheduling.

Students discussed several problems experienced during the practicum. For example, while some students benefitted from regular engagement with their school-assigned mentor others were not observed in the classroom at all and only met with their mentor once. While the practicum is supposed to be an accompanied teaching experience, with the student-teacher serving as an assistant in the first week (MoE, 2011b), some participants were teaching on their own from the start. Student-teachers interviewed were generally not engaged in the school during the practicum beyond the class to which they

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<sup>139</sup> PGDT guidelines stipulate that the program is to be 30% school based, including a week in schools at the beginning of the program, ongoing observations in Term 2, and a one-month extended teaching experience (practicum) in Term 3 (MoE, 2011b). The actual offering for most students fell far from achieving this.

were assigned and did not participate in co-curricular activities (as suggested in the practicum guidelines, MoE, 2011b).

The aspect of the practicum which was most frequently cited by students as troubling to them was the active discouragement they received from teachers in schools about staying in the teaching profession:

By themselves the teachers come and they give you like an advice: “Why you chose teaching?” they ask. “Teaching, it’s not good for you. For the time being, okay. . . maybe one or two years, but don’t be a teacher”. “Show us”, they say, “show us that you can do more!” [Female, Physics PGDT student]

For some, these comments confirmed their own views but for others who intended to teach for at least a few years, the repetition of this advice was disconcerting and talking to teachers who were actively trying to leave the profession disheartening. Two of the student-teachers shared that their assigned mentor was about to complete studies in another field and change jobs, which did little to inspire them as teachers.

Several student-teachers also expressed being shocked during the practicum by student behavior in the classroom and towards them as teachers. During my observations of practicum teaching, I witnessed a variety of disruptive student behavior in class including chalk-throwing, banging on desks and slamming doors, vocal interjections, late arrivals and simply ignoring the teacher. Several female student-teachers felt that male teachers were more respected than women by the students, particularly if “muscular” (a theme that will be explored further in the next chapter). Many felt that they had not been adequately taught how to handle disruptive student behavior and that this absorbed most of their energy and thoughts during the practicum. Some student-teachers discussed these challenges with school mentors who viewed the problem as a lack of female

assertiveness.<sup>140</sup> In most of the classes I observed, the student-teacher started in English (perhaps for my benefit) but shifted into Amharic as students got disruptive and the class progressed.

With the proper accompaniment and reflection, challenges faced during student-teaching can be effectively used as an opportunity for learning, as PGDT guidelines acknowledge. It can potentially allow student-teachers to test their capacities through application and heighten their understanding of the context in which they will function, with all its constraints and possibilities. However, several of the students interviewed said that they did not have an opportunity to collectively reflect on or discuss their practicum experiences with lecturers and other trainees when they returned to classes.<sup>141</sup> Feedback from faculty supervisors, most of whom observed only one class per student, varied but was generally brief. While some students brushed off the practicum as just another hoop to jump through in order to complete the program, others expressed a sense of discouragement and disempowerment and concluded that teaching will “just be difficult” and that most secondary school students, particularly boys, are unresponsive to teacher efforts. The experience of the practicum more than anything else confirmed negative impressions of the teaching profession and, at least for some, the validity of their intentions to exit as soon as possible.

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<sup>140</sup> Very few students had a female mentor and interviews did not reveal if they received any different advice from them.

<sup>141</sup> Instead students and faculty were preoccupied with the write up for action-research projects they were assigned to undertake at the same time as their practicum, which they understandably found very difficult to manage. Neither this element nor the practicum received adequate time and space for discussion and faculty feed-back.

## Student Views on Gender Equality and Equity in Teaching

While several faculty commented that it is important for women to be in schools as role models for female students and to inspire them to do well, this was mentioned by only a few of the female student-teachers interviewed.<sup>142</sup> Being one of less than a handful of female physics teachers, for example, was viewed primarily as a personal accomplishment and not necessarily for its value in inspiring others or advancing gender equality in society. Very few had given much thought to how they might promote gender equity in their classrooms and schools, although at least three expressed the desire to counter biases they had experienced as females in their own schooling.

As already noted, the PGDT program did very little to inspire and train program participants in this regard. Neither was there any targeted effort to build capacity among women trainees for professional advancement. This was manifested in the PGDT program in the absence of women among class representatives. What was missing, moreover, was valuing the role of women in leadership and being able to envision oneself in such a role. Most of the women PGDT students interviewed expressed that their priority was to complete their studies and they did not need to be “distracted” or to draw attention to themselves, an extension of the distancing strategy adopted earlier on in their university experiences. A couple of participants believed that students do not want women to represent them because they think that men can be more forceful with their demands and withstand whatever hardship may follow. Such adaptive preferences limited the taking up of opportunities that could aid development of leadership-supporting

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<sup>142</sup> There were, however, more women in-service teachers who viewed being a role model and “inspiring students” as a professional functioning that they valued.

capabilities, such as autonomy and voice, and can be seen to extend into the school environment where very few women occupy school director and vice-director positions.

### **Discussion of Findings**

#### **Officially-Valued Professional Capabilities**

A public teacher education program can be understood, in part, to be responsible for increasing awareness among participants about what is officially valued in teachers' work (by the MoE as the employer of public school teachers); for developing a shared valuation of what constitutes "good" or "quality" teaching; and for aiding participants to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and capacities (s-capabilities) needed to effectively put what is valued into action. A teacher education program can, thus, potentially influence teachers' choices about what capabilities and functionings to prioritize in the context of their work and increase their efficacy and agency to be able to realize valued functionings. This is in line with Sen's understanding of agency, which entails both the freedom (choice and opportunity) to decide and the power to act and to be effective. Ideally, underpinning this is a positive identification of prospective teachers with the teaching profession and commitment to it, which a teacher education program should also foster.

In analyzing students' experiences of the PGDT program it is helpful to review the professional functionings and related capabilities the MoE values in teachers' work and expects teacher education to be able to develop in its participants.<sup>143</sup> This can partly be discerned from PGDT guidelines (MoE, 2009) that stipulate the following

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<sup>143</sup> The next chapter will address professional functionings valued by in-service teachers themselves and the constraints they face in achieving them.

“objectives” for the new program (which for the purposes here can be understood as professional capabilities and related functionings to be enhanced):

- Knowledge: Equip trainees with the knowledge, skills and dispositions required to become effective secondary school teachers.
- Professionalism: Develop understanding of the responsibilities of teachers and the professional values and ethical practice expected of them. (Not directly addressed but subsumed under this is development of a long-term commitment to teaching. Elsewhere, MoE guidelines (2011b) also discuss development of positive relationships with parents and the community under professionalism).
- Lifelong learning: Create awareness that a central characteristic of teaching as a career is engagement in a lifelong process of professional learning and development.
- Reflective practice: Enable trainees to become reflective practitioners who are able to analyze, evaluate and act to improve their own practice and develop further professional knowledge and skills through life-long learning.
- Research: Develop trainees' capacity to engage in research to inform and develop their practice.
- Promotion of equity: Institutionalize equity in the teaching force.
- Policy knowledge and participation: Develop trainees' capacity to understand education policy and strategies and to participate in curriculum and other program development initiatives.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>144</sup>Loyalty to the government is also highly valued (is perhaps most valued) but does not explicitly feature among the objectives of the PGDT program.

The capability of knowledge is particularly privileged in policy documents, with the problem of inadequate subject matter competence and the general tendency of the teaching profession to “attract low performing students” receiving much attention in the review of the previous teacher education system (MoE, 2009). With the PGDT program, this is now expected to be addressed in large part by having prospective secondary school teachers complete a Bachelor’s degree in their subject area before starting teacher training. This path poses its own challenges, however. The prospective teachers in this study did not intend to go into teaching and viewed themselves first and foremost as graduates of other fields (i.e., as chemists or microbiologists, etc.). MoE expectations seem to be that strong identification and positive associations with the profession will somehow automatically emerge through enrollment in the PGDT program. The findings of this dissertation highlight that not only is this not automatic (merely telling students they will soon be teachers and treating them as such is inadequate) but there are significant experiences during the program itself that negatively impact the orientation of pre-service teachers toward the profession and the development of the capabilities listed above. It is also commonly presumed that having graduated with an undergraduate degree, pre-service teachers’ language competence and confidence in English will be well-developed but this was often not the case, particularly for women, and was inadequately prioritized during training, thus undermining the development of other capabilities in the same fashion as in undergraduate study.

The discussion below will now consider some of the underlying social and institutional conversion factors that emerged from the findings presented above as seriously constraining students’ development of officially-valued capabilities. While



these factors affect all students, the disadvantage already experienced by women during undergraduate study make the problem more acute for female teachers. Given prevailing gender bias about women's inherent abilities the implications of these constraints are also greater, as is the de-prioritization of gender equity in teacher education by faculty and institutionally.

### **The “Single Story” of Faculty Narratives**

Faculty views described above about pre-service teachers as poor-performing, uncommitted, opportunistic and lacking in competency and confidence, were consolidated into a single story that was oft repeated. It is a story that evoked pessimism and the feeling that there is not much that can be done with “these students.” As Nigerian author and feminist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has persuasively argued, “[T]here is a danger in the single story...a single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make the one story become the only story” (Adichie, 2009, cited in Tao, 2013, p.10).<sup>145</sup> Similarly, the single story that many CoE&BS faculty members told were not fabricated but based on their, albeit at times, biased observations. My own interviews and conversations with students revealed that there are many who are doubtful about staying in teaching for more than a few years or even entering it at all. Many of the students do struggle with English and some demonstrate limited understanding of course materials. However, the generalization of these characteristics to all students and their consolidation into a single narrative that is continually repeated until it becomes the only story told about

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<sup>145</sup> Adichie, popularized the notion of “the single story” in a 2009 TedGlobal talk, widely circulated through the internet, in which she elucidates the dangers caused by the single story of poverty, violence and disease that is repeatedly told about Africa. Tao (2013) similarly adopts this trope in her dissertation which aims to disrupt the single story of the “Third World Teacher”.

prospective teachers is highly problematic, particularly for a program that is intended to build capacity for professional service. This is not to say that there were no counter-narratives expressed by a few faculty members, but a dominant story was readily discernable without recognition on the part of most regarding its dangers.

This single story, for one, fails to acknowledge the actual diversity of experiences, paths into teaching and orientations of students toward the teaching profession. It belies the complexity of the lives and stories behind the actions it purports to explain through its simplistic and limiting narrative. The profile of the four students presented at the beginning of this chapter reveal some of this diversity as well as the structural constraints within which students' orientation toward teaching develop. Genet, for example, always wanted to be a teacher and is committed to remain in the profession for as long as she is financially able. She overcame great personal obstacles, including the threat of early marriage, to graduate from university in mathematics—a field with one of the highest academic dismissal rates in Ethiopia. Similarly, Meron cannot be fairly summed up as a “poor performer” lacking in commitment. She has a strong background in mathematics and although she would rather be in the field of medicine, she is willing to do her best for the years that she does spend as a teacher—this despite having received little encouragement from anyone but her mother. Samira was not interested in teaching, not because she does not like the actual practice, but because she wants to be financially independent and is interested in the health field. She demonstrated confidence and considerable skill during her practicum but it was left to her students to plead with her to continue as a teacher (as they tearfully did on the last day of her class). Zuriash fits the single story most closely, having very little interest in teaching and actively seeking

alternative employment (although she never misses classes). However, she too managed to navigate a female-unfriendly HE environment in which most of her classmates were dismissed (is the first female in her family to receive any formal schooling beyond primary school) and believes she must, largely due to her religious beliefs, do her best in whatever she takes on. All these students felt strongly that they should be doing something with their education and that this imperative is greater for them as females.

These women represent a precious resource, a small minority of female university graduates from among millions of women in the country. They are among the educational success stories of university-graduated women that the government and donor-agencies applaud, but they are unacknowledged in the single story told about teacher education students. The obstacles they have managed to overcome, the capacity and resilience they have already shown, the investments of their families and of society as a whole in getting them to this point are nullified and their perspectives ignored by the narrative of this single story.

Furthermore, in narrating the single story faculty tended to lapse into the language of individual deficit, emphasizing lack of motivation or aptitude, even though in the same interview they might acknowledge broader structural constraints such as the limited prospects offered by the teaching profession or the effects of gender norms. Schooling and language deficits in this way come to be equated with student deficit, feeding the lament about the poor quality of teachers and education in the country. As at least one faculty member acknowledged, however, if the aim of a program like the PGDT is to develop capacity and professional capabilities it needs to begin where students are at. The findings of this study lead us to affirm what Griesel emphasizes: “the fact remains—and

needs continually to be restated—that higher education must build on the foundation created by the education and training opportunities which precede students’ progression into higher education” (2006, p. 5, cited in Wilson-Strydom, 2012, p. 41). This point was also passionately argued by a faculty member whose self-reflection and critical insights were a striking and hopeful contrast to those more commonly expressed:

If we work with them [PGDT students] they will improve. It is not that they are doomed. These students are the products of the system. This is what the country has. These are the graduates. Teacher educators have a responsibility in this, for these students were taught by the teachers we previously “trained.” We need to be asking “what can I do as a teacher educator to improve learning?” not “how do I get out of teaching this class.” We have to work with them. Teacher education is about adding value. What value are we adding? Everyone should be asking themselves this. But instead many lecturers want to place their frustrations and anger on students. [Male, AAU CoE&BS Faculty member]

The deficit thinking described above perpetuates and deepens the gender biases to which women were already subjected during undergraduate study, and capabilities such as autonomy, respect and recognition, language competence and voice are further undermined. As earlier noted, several faculty expressed doubts about whether female students were academically strong enough or had the confidence and necessary capabilities to manage a classroom.<sup>146</sup> In contrast, these anxieties were not shared by most of the young women PDGT students and newly qualified teachers I interviewed. They were confident, while acknowledging that it may be difficult at first, that they could manage their classrooms and indicated a preference for teaching at the secondary school level because it is more intellectually challenging. This points to a strong desire on the part of young women, again in contrast to the single story, to develop the necessary capabilities that would allow them to succeed at secondary school teaching.

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<sup>146</sup> These doubts were also expressed by school directors and head teachers, and internalized by some in-service teachers themselves, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

### **Lack of Faculty and Institutional Ownership**

A significant factor undermining the intended purpose of the teacher education program and what trainees were able to develop through it was lack of ownership and real engagement on the part of faculty. Findings of this study confirm what Tessema (2007) has written about managerially, top-down directed reform and micro-managing on the part of the MoE in Ethiopian teacher education, which result in the side-stepping of educators. The consequence, seen to be at work in the experiences examined here, is a peripheralization of educators by managerial processes and by faculty's own intentional withdrawal as a form of resistance or lack of power. "Their presence in the process [of reform]," explains Tessema, "is a structural consequence rather than an emotional and deliberative engagement" (Tessema, p. 41, 2007).

This disengagement on the part of faculty was coupled in this case with a broader lack of ownership at the college and institutional level. This was in part apparent in failure to meet the expected provision of adequate board and classroom space, and offering of an orientation program and other elements basic to such a program. Many students and some faculty interpreted this as a broader reflection of how teacher education and teachers are undervalued in Ethiopia. In an environment in which the status of the teaching profession is so beleaguered, what may be usual bureaucratic inefficiency takes on graver and more negative import. Far from systematic and intentional efforts to reclaim value for the profession and empower teachers, the provision of teacher education has taken on the form of half-hearted compliance with directives from the MoE; a performance of sorts.

### **Institutional (De)Prioritization of Gender Equality**

The lack of ownership was also apparent in the effective de-prioritization of gender equity concerns described earlier. The combination of perpetual, top-down reforms, widespread quality problems, and fatigue over the rhetoric around gender equality (cynically dismissed as a political game), left very little space for active commitment or thoughtful reflection on how to advance gender equality at the level of College programs and policies. Some faculty acknowledged the need for such programs and made piecemeal efforts to bring gender-sensitive teaching methods and discussion of gender into their classrooms, but for the most part this stood out as an area of neglect.

While the advocates are few, there is a great deal more that can be done within the teacher education program to develop the capabilities of teachers to identify and act as agents of social change in general, and with respect to gender equality specifically. As Aikman and Unterhalter contend, “transformational education needs *transformed teachers*. It is important, therefore, that the training of teachers and adult educators not only raises their status and self-esteem but is empowering for them and, through their teaching, for their students” (2005, p. 247). This is a project that goes far beyond a concern with female representation and adjustments in selection guidelines for entry into teacher education.

### **Promising Prospects and Enhancing Factors**

While highlighting factors that constrain the ability of teachers to develop valuable professional capabilities in the context of the PGDT program, it is important not to paint an unduly negative picture. In conjunction with these constraining conversion

factors, there was also evidence of instances in which student capabilities were enhanced, as intended by the program, indicating strengths on which to build.

Despite the generally negative attitudes toward the PGDT program, there were faculty members whose dedication to their role as teacher educators and efficacy in carrying out this role was noteworthy. Students were very appreciative of such faculty who invested time in them, assisted them to explore different concepts and to develop their skills, as expressed by this student:

[N] So you liked your class with Dr. X?

[T] Yes. It is very interesting. She is different and she is good. I especially like that she gives us space to participate and do things on our own. She wants us to know who we are and to learn. She wants us to practice and develop our skill. We prepared dialogues and presented in the class. . . . Being interested makes me feel good and [to] want to know more about it, it motivates me to study and to understand. [Female, English PGDT student]

As with any single story, there are those who express counter-views that disrupt and challenge the dominant narrative. Two of the faculty members quoted earlier in the chapter, whose comments questioned the more dominant perception of PGDT students and the role of faculty, voiced their challenge not only to me but also to their colleagues, opening a space for critical reflection. Moreover, it was my sense that the repeated telling of the single story was fed, in part, by a general frustration with the direction and nature of education reform in the country rather than deep-seated bias against students (although there is entrenched bias against women students in some quarters). This does not lessen the negative consequences but does indicate the possibility for faculty to readily

recognize the dangers inherent in the single story in the context of a program intended to build capacity in its participants to educate others.<sup>147</sup>

It is also important to note the strengths of a faculty such as that of the AAU CoE&BS, which is comprised of highly qualified Ethiopian educators. Most hold doctoral degrees and many have years of experience as teachers in secondary schools. Many have ongoing contact with schools, conduct their own research and know well the challenges teachers face in their country. They are not removed from the context in which their students will be teaching and are, thus, very well suited to facilitate learning grounded in the realities of schools. This is a precious resource and ways to bring faculty on board as fully engaged partners need further examination.

Lastly, 2013/14 was the first full-time offering of the PGDT program, but without adequate administrative support and coordination in place. Some of the reasons for this reflect broader and more fundamental problems but there was hope on the part of faculty and students that certain aspects of the program could easily improve. Moreover, the policies of the Ethiopian government, including the PGDT guidelines, are more advanced from a gender perspective than in some other African countries (see Mulugeta, 2012) and already address some of the factors discussed in this chapter, particularly the need for more school-based practical training and reflection. There is, thus, a supportive policy context and important partnerships between the university, school and local government are being built. With sustained focus and ongoing learning this is an area that can

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<sup>147</sup> In one interview, I questioned a faculty member, with whom I had developed a good relationship, about the implications of perpetuating the negative narrative about student-teachers that he had just expressed. He readily acknowledged its unconstructive nature and went on to describe the structural constraints facing teachers as an extreme form of what he experienced as a lecturer (emphasizing the low pay and push to leave the profession) and empathized with their situation.



improve, although fuller and more substantive participation of faculty and keener gender analysis needs to be fostered.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an in-depth account into the backgrounds and aspirations of the female students entering the PGDT program and contrasted this with the single, incomplete and simplistic story told about all pre-service teachers. Unconstructive faculty and institutional responses to the offering of the full-time PGDT program and limiting attitudes toward women student-teachers and pursuance of gender equality were also analyzed. Each of these dynamics, in their own way, contributed to the problems described and acted as factors constraining the ability of students, particularly female students, to convert their participation in teacher education into the development of professional capabilities or to overcome earlier disadvantage. The valuing of officially-promoted capabilities and related functionings, such as those noted here, were further undermined by the failure to effectively foster a positive teacher identity and strong professional commitment.

While a teacher education program can potentially influence what teachers professionally value and enhance their capacity to act with power and efficacy, the school environment places its own constraints on teachers' agency freedom and achievement. For this reason, it can be argued that to truly enhance the capacity to act effectively, teacher education programs need to be grounded in the realities of schools and to aid teachers to successfully navigate, and potentially transform, existing constraints. This includes understanding particular constraints they and their students will face in relation to gender. It has been described here how in various ways PGDT courses did not

adequately raise consciousness of the operation of gender inequalities and regimes in schools, include gender-responsive training or facilitate the capability development of women in the program. At the same time, the practicum exposed students to the realities of schools without the accompaniment and facilitated reflection needed to draw encouragement and empowerment from the experience.

## Chapter 8: Early Career Experiences in Secondary School Teaching, Part 1 – The Personal Dimension of Teachers’ Lives

The previous chapter highlighted factors related to the PGDT program which inhibited, and in some cases diminished, the development of a positive teacher identity and commitment to the profession as well as of officially-valued professional capabilities and functionings. For many study participants, the experience confirmed that teaching can as best serve as an “in-between” profession during which time other fields of study and employment need to be actively pursued. As previously noted, the majority of student-teachers interviewed (formally and informally) intended to teach for less than three years.

General views about what the teaching profession offers teachers, in terms of their personal well-being and life opportunities, were very similar across PGDT students and in-service teachers. The dominant themes emerging from teacher accounts in this respect are presented in the first part of this chapter. The chapter then offers a closer examination of the personal functionings women teachers valued and why, the constraints (beyond income) they faced in achieving these personal functionings, and the general condition of occupational immobility confronting them (despite teaching being entered into as an “in-between” occupation).<sup>148</sup> Chapter 9 will then examine the well-being and agency of women teachers with respect to the professional dimension of their lives. A summary

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<sup>148</sup> A note on terminology is helpful here. The term functionings is used more often in this chapter than capabilities for two reasons. One is to more directly incorporate the voice and framing of teachers themselves, who spoke about specific doings and beings they valued and were trying to achieve rather than the capabilities that allow for them. The other is because functionings are generally taken here as proxies for capabilities. What has or has not been achieved (e.g., in terms of housing, childcare arrangements etc.) is easier to assess and describe than the potential.

discussion of the findings relating to early teaching experiences<sup>149</sup>—spanning both chapters—is offered at the end of the next chapter.

### **Dominant Over-Arching Themes**

#### **Teaching: A Low Pay, Low Status Profession**

**Not enough to live by:** The issue of low pay or inadequate remuneration was raised as the singular most constraining factor in teachers' lives by all the participants interviewed, formally and informally, such that many felt there was no need to speak of anything beyond the inability of a teacher to provide for herself and her family in order to understand the reality of being a teacher in urban Ethiopia. These quotes from in-service teachers reflect such commonly-held sentiments:

[N] So you say the teacher salary is not very much. . . .

[T] Oh! Don't, don't, let me start please! [Laughs exasperatedly] If you ask all of these teachers, they have no words. They explain by crying. Yeah! Really. So many problems because of this salary. [Female, English teacher, grade 9]

When I look at my sister and relatives, I am the first to study at university. I am the first to choose the teaching profession but it is not helping me. My family worries a lot. They tell me "How are you going to live like this? [Female, Biology teacher, grade 9]

How can they [teachers] continue in this profession if they are not making their house rent? Without eating? . . . . If you look at how our teachers are dressing. I mean it's far inferior to their students and because of that they are humiliated, they are abused by their students, even by parents. So if we are not looking carefully after our teachers, I don't think we will have a generation of teachers in the near future. [AAU CoE&BS Faculty Member and former secondary school teacher]

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<sup>149</sup> As previously noted (see Chapter 5), the group of study participants in their "early career" was expanded to include any teacher in their early to late-twenties who had been teaching for no more than 7 years (most under 5 years) in order to explore more fully patterns of attrition, experiences of married teachers with children and responses to occupational immobility.

During my 15 months of field work I heard many anecdotes and stories about the materially dire straits in which teachers find themselves and the impact on student and community perceptions of the profession. These stories had great traction and circulated in homes, schools, university hallways and ministry offices, influencing people's views in persuasive ways. Text box 2 below includes one such anecdote, which was recounted in an interview with a faculty member in the CoE&BS at AAU.

### **Text Box 2: Stories in Circulation**

#### **When teaching doesn't pay**

When we visited one school in Bahir Dar [large urban center in Amhara region], there was a graduate from Bahir Dar University who graduated in Civics. . . . I found him as a guard in a primary school. I asked him why? Why don't you go and teach? At least when you teach you are serving your brothers and sisters, you are serving your society. He said "Ha ha, that's good. I can do that while I am a guard in this school." Since the school management knows that he is a degree graduate they are giving him one or two classes to teach in the extension program. Therefore, he is teaching and he is a guard. When he is working as a guard, he spends one day in the school, the immediate day after he is free. During the gaps he has a Bajaj taxi that he is operating to earn more. . . . In one sense, at a societal level we see he is a degree graduate but he is working as a guard. But when you compare being a guard and being a teacher, being a guard he is getting better earnings. He told me he earns minimum 5,500 Birr a month. More than a professor! This extremely devalues the will of the teachers. These are the issues. [Male, AAU faculty member]

Another faculty member described how in a nearby Addis Ababa secondary school, one of the oldest and best known in the country, teachers earlier that year had been sleeping in the staff lounge because they could not afford to pay rent. This continued until the school administration eventually used resources from its income-generating activities (renting classrooms) to help the teachers find a place.

In Ethiopia all secondary school teachers are paid the same salary, with those living in large urban areas such as Addis Ababa receiving a small basic allowance to compensate for higher transportation and accommodation costs. When I started

interviews in February 2014, the starting monthly salary of a secondary school teacher after tax and other deductions (amounting to more than 30% of their salary) was approximately Birr 1,600 (approximately USD 80/month). The cost of renting a small room for one person, a domestic worker's quarters in someone's compound, was Birr 600 to 800 but most teachers I interviewed said accommodation under Birr 1,000 was very hard to find and a place in which a family might live was certainly above Birr 2,000 (USD 100).<sup>150</sup> Housing was specified as the single largest expense but cost of food and transportation, as well as clothing and household items, have all seen dramatic increases over the past decade in urban Ethiopia.

In September 2014, government worker salaries were increased and the starting salary for a secondary school teacher in Addis Ababa was raised to approximately Birr 2,000/month after deductions (USD 100/month). This included the allowance of Birr 300 for transportation/housing for Addis Ababa. Although this is a significant percentage increase, it was widely considered inadequate to compensate for the high country-level inflation rates and rise in cost of living.<sup>151</sup> As one person explained it to me, "to survive in this city as a teacher you have to become a magician."<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> These are, by all accounts, conservative estimates. A government-built condominium apartment, which is becoming the standard type of accommodation for the lower middle class in the city (and those whose families don't own prior property), generally rents over Birr 3,000/month for a one-bedroom apartment.

<sup>151</sup> While in the last few years inflation has been reduced, for example from what it was in 2009 when food inflation alone was 52.6% (VSO, 2009), people continue to struggle to meet basic needs. Indeed, the 2014 government worker pay raise was accompanied by rise in the price of teff and other staple foods.

<sup>152</sup> In Addis, one effect of money from diaspora and foreign NGOs and agencies (e.g., African Union, UN agencies, etc.) that pay their employees vastly more than the government sector is that there is growing inequality. As a result, a kind of anomie seems to have set in, in which aspirations do not match the opportunities available to the majority of people to achieve them and young people in particular feel growing discontent. However, while this may be more acute in Addis Ababa, it is not restricted to the capital and the inadequacy of teacher salaries is voiced as a pressing concern across the country (Mains, 2012; VSO 2009 and faculty interviews in this study). It is also in this context that the lure of migrating to more affluent countries remains strong.

MoE personnel interviewed acknowledged the inadequacy of teacher salaries, school directors said they regularly raised the issue, as did school representatives of the Ethiopian Teachers' Association. Whether the problem was seen as an issue of budgetary constraint and fear of wage-led inflation, of international donor priorities and unwillingness to contribute to "recurrent costs," or as a lack of political will and reflection of society's disregard for teachers, very few expressed hope that salaries could or would increase enough to significantly change the material circumstances of teachers' lives or the status of the profession.

**Family support and extended material dependency:** The significant subsidization of teachers by their families is an aspect, particularly of young teachers' lives, that is not generally discussed in the research and policy literature. Many of the pre- and in-service teachers interviewed were living with family in Addis Ababa, and others were receiving ongoing financial support from relatives, but this kind of indefinite support was not available to everyone. Some did not have family able and willing to accommodate, feed and clothe them well into adulthood. For those without such support, and particularly for those on whom others were dependent, the situation was very difficult. Moreover, as the number of secondary school teachers from low-income and rural households grows this kind of family support will become increasingly limited. Among study participants, support from siblings played a prominent role, sometimes in surprising ways. For example, one female teacher was being supported by her younger sister who was working as a domestic helper in the UAE and left school after completing grade 10. Another was being supported by her elder sisters who were married at age 16 and who had not study beyond primary school.

This extended material dependency is also a significant contributor to the negative societal view toward teaching as a dead-end profession and the constant urging young teachers receive to change their profession. The gendered implications of this extended material dependency on family will be discussed later in this chapter.

**Incommensurability of years of education with pay:** Beyond the pressing question of “How do I live off of Birr 2000 a month?,” it was the meagerness of this amount relative to the level of education attained—three years of university resulting in a bachelors degree plus an additional year of post-graduate study (and for many grade 11 and 12 teachers a master’s degree as well)—that was viewed as unjust. As one PGDT student passionately commented during a class discussion I led:

Are we just machines? Do we just come out from the education like a machine from the factory and live without hope, without improving our life? [Male, Biology PGDT student (field notes)]

It was, furthermore, a cause of displeasure for families and communities who had invested their resources and hopes in these university graduates now struggling to meet even their own living expenses. Several female participants commented that while it was expected that graduating from university would mean better job prospects, even domestic workers without a high school diploma could make more money than teachers.<sup>153</sup>

**Comparisons with peers in government service:** In a similar vein, participants often made comparisons with their contemporaries with similar educational backgrounds. Research participants commented on how their peers working in banks or other government offices were earning more adequate salaries and had greater opportunities for

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<sup>153</sup> This was certainly the case at the time for domestic workers hired by expatriates and some diaspora families. Given the highly gendered division of domestic service, with women being the vast majority of those working inside the home, this was a common comparison and reinforced the point that university education had done nothing to improve the status and opportunities of women.



career advancement. Even though teachers start out earning slightly higher salaries than counterparts in some other government sectors, the salary increments they receive are very small so that the advantage is short-lived (VSO, 2009).<sup>154</sup> Furthermore, the possibility of additional benefits in other government jobs is perceived to be greater:

[F] It is not only the monthly payment alone that matters. The teacher is always there in the school – no per diem, no workshop, no allowance. They are always there. [AAU faculty member]

[N] Now that you are changing jobs to work in the Statistics Agency [government agency], will you be paid more?

[T] Yes! Look, at this time as a teacher I am paid Birr 2,800 [after 6 years of teaching]. This is after the recent increase. The [statistics] agency will pay me around 4,000 and there are incentives and pay increase after one year. The job is in the office, when you go to the regions you are paid a per diem. So there is more money. [Male, Geography teacher, grade 9 & 10]

Such disparities were felt even more acutely now that secondary school teachers earn a first degree in another field and see themselves as having had the same possibilities as their peers had they not entered teaching.

**Low status of teachers:** What also merits comment here is the connection between low pay and the low status of teachers in Ethiopia. I persistently probed interviewees (teachers, school directors and faculty alike) to consider different factors that may contribute to the low status of teaching in Ethiopia but it usually came back to the issue of pay:

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<sup>154</sup> There is also the issue of not valuing those who stay in the profession, and not adequately remunerating them. This was recounted by one of the AAU faculty:

“By the way one factor is the low remuneration issue. When they adjust...like, I work for about 28 years now. After MA degree I worked for 21 years and my salary level is equivalent to the one who is graduating last year. A person who is graduating this summer is having the same salary as me. And that makes you feel disregarded, you know. There should be . . . your experience, your long stay in the teaching profession is value in itself but they are devaluing it. A recent graduate can be more productive, more energetic I know but he has to stay longer in the career. The able ones, that’s why they are moving out.” (AAU faculty member)

The reason why people hate to be a teacher is that you don't see a change. I met my teacher that taught me 10 years ago, and I found him the same as I saw him last time. No change at all. He has not built a house or changed his life around. [Female, Amharic teacher, grade 9]

If you tell to people that you are a teacher, they think “she doesn't have a house, she doesn't have good clothes, she is poor.” [Female, Mathematics teacher, grade 9 & 10]

Sometimes I just feel ashamed to say I am a teacher. Even in the family, my aunt says, “Oh, I don't know what is wrong with this family. Everyone is a teacher?” They just think it is causing our problems. There's no respect for this profession. [Female, Chemistry teacher, grade 9]

In informal conversations older adults spoke about a shift from an elite profession that employed largely expatriate teachers in the 1950s and 1960s and then top Ethiopian university graduates, associated with cosmopolitanism, progressiveness, and being learned, to one that employed masses of reportedly low achieving young Ethiopians. Several attributed this to rapid expansion of schooling under the communist and current government policies. Others noted the lack of freedom associated with political control of the profession, although this was reported to be much stronger in regions outside of Addis Ababa.<sup>155</sup> Invariably, however, the discussion returned to how teachers in the past could afford to treat others to lunch and coffee, had nice houses, wore the best clothes, owned books and television sets, and “married the most beautiful women.” As far as popular perceptions among teachers and others were concerned, it was the material conditions of teachers' lives that had greatest bearing on their status in society.

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<sup>155</sup> A male secondary school teacher in his mid-forties who had recently transferred from a small regional town to Addis Ababa, with whom I had an extended conversation, expressed his main appreciation for schools in Addis Ababa in terms of the relative freedom from political influences and pressure on teachers obliging them to participate in party activities. Given the strong ethnic overtones of political divides in contemporary Ethiopia, even teachers Addis Ababa commented that a major reason to stay away from leadership positions in schools, such as director and vice-director, was to avoid such political pressures.

## Teaching: An “In-Between” Occupation

Given this context, participant accounts revealed a situation in which teaching is commonly viewed as an occupation to be held between graduating and finding better work. This is reflected in the specific education and professional plans that in-service teachers shared during interviews. Table 9 indicates what the nineteen in-service teachers interviewed at length (16 women, 3 men) were currently engaged in or hoped to do in the next three to five years.<sup>156</sup>

**Table 9: Educational and Professional Plans of 19 In-Service Teachers Interviewed**

<b>Educational and professional goal</b>	<b>No. about to achieve or currently pursuing goal</b>	<b>No. planning to pursue goal in near future</b>
<i>Transfer to another government job</i>	1 (male, transferring to national statistics agency)	1 (female, interested in land surveying)
<i>Transfer to job in private sector</i>	1 (female, already completed master's degrees, actively seeking employment in NGO and business sectors)	1 (female, seeking job in accounting)
<i>Self-employment</i>	1 (female, co-owner of hair dressing salon)	1 (female, planning to join sisters in catering business)
<i>Obtain second bachelor's degree to change profession</i>	8 (2 male, 4 females. Most popular fields: accounting, business administration, engineering (men) and health-related (women))	2 (females)
<i>Obtain Master's degree to change profession</i>		2 (females)
<i>Obtain Master's degree/PhD to teach at university level</i>		1 (female)
<i>Continue secondary school teaching</i>	2 (females)	
<b>Total = 19</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>

<sup>156</sup> These 16 women include four who were interviewed as PGDT students and then again six months or more into their full-time teaching. Their plans at the time of final interview, as in-service teachers, is included in this table.

From this snapshot, it can be seen that the majority of teachers interviewed were either engaged in or had plans to use their time while teaching to enter another field or occupation. Other teachers with whom I had informal conversations in schools and around the city (numbering more than twenty) shared much the same plans. For some, studying something else or getting a graduate degree was the plan from the start and a means to enter a field they could not before. Others were driven to this because teaching does not allow them to make enough income to achieve what they have reason to value. It is in this light that teaching was viewed by many as an “in-between” occupation, as illustrated by these very common accounts:

[N] So you say there are many teachers here that are planning to leave?

[T] Yeah! Everyone is trying to leave.

[N] Do you know anyone who wants to stay?

[T] Not really

[N] What about your husband [*also a teacher, at another school*], he wants to stay in teaching?

[T] No, actually he is studying civil engineering. I hope he will get a good job and we will have enough money. [Female, History teacher, grade 10]

[N] Do you think you will change your work?

[T] Yes, first I will study. I have started business administration and information system at Commerce.

[N] Is it a master's degree or another bachelors?

[T] Another bachelors. This is my third year. I will graduate in one year. It is four years because it is extension.

[N] So when you started teaching you immediately also started studying something else?

[T] Yes [laughs]. My family helped me. [Female, Geography teacher, grade 9 & 10]

It can also be seen from this excerpt that some of those studying, particularly before cost-sharing is complete, were doing so with family support because their salary was insufficient to cover tuition. The same was true for those who started businesses. This further contributes to the trend in which it is those from low-income backgrounds, without substantial family support, who enter and remain in the profession.

**Here but not here:** During the time that these teachers are working in secondary schools, energy, resources and aspirations are, thus, often directed toward leaving the profession (although women and men may be differently constrained in their ability to find alternative employment as will be discussed later). This results in a situation in which even while teachers are physically present in schools,<sup>157</sup> many are mentally preoccupied with other concerns and feel frustrated.<sup>158</sup> The situation is described in the following comments, which are representative of a view articulated by several teachers and faculty interviewed:<sup>159</sup>

So the teachers, one, they are leaving. Two, they are not working in schools. I mean, physically they are there. They are just there to survive until they get another job. They are leaving not because teaching is bad. They all understand that this is a very nice profession. It is looking for better life. It is to survive. [AAU CoE &BS Faculty member]

[N] Are teachers absent from class a lot?

[T] No. Mostly the teachers are honest. They do their work. They teach what is for their salary. Physically teachers are there but psychologically they are absent. When they leave the classroom they think about what they could be doing. It is not good for teaching. [Female, Biology teacher, grade 9 & 10]

Whether the “what they could be doing” alluded to in the above quote is studying, job hunting, or earning supplemental income through tutoring or another business, the in-service teachers interviewed were often stretched thin and felt exhausted. These circumstances notwithstanding, participants considered themselves to be diligent in their teaching duties. For most, this diligence was

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<sup>157</sup> Teacher absenteeism (not being in class when assigned to teach) was not raised as an issue by participants or directors that I interviewed in Addis Ababa, although this is a problem in some schools.

<sup>158</sup> In my field notes and reflections, I began jotting observations related to this under the tag “zombie profession”, although this was not a term anyone actually used. The conditions leading to this kind of a professional existence, its deleterious effect on developing a constructive teacher identity and the different ways teachers respond to these circumstances preoccupied my mind a lot of the time in the field. These are tied to serious structural constraints not issues of individual motivation and ability as is often the focus of the “Third World Teacher” discourse (Tao, 2013).

<sup>159</sup> This view was expressed in six interviews and came up repeatedly in informal conversations.

directed to meeting the minimum requirements of their work, given various other priorities, but some participants went beyond this, as will be discussed later.

### **“Teaching Itself, I Like It”**

Despite the low pay and status, and various other challenges in schools, a refrain expressed by several teachers, women and men alike, was “teaching itself, I like it!” While a few had no interest in teaching, several insisted that if it were not for the low pay they would like to remain in the profession. Some teachers admitted that they initially had no interest in teaching but having been forced into it through various circumstances they had come to appreciate and enjoy the actual teaching, even though most were still intent on leaving.

With regards to what they appreciated about teaching, a number of factors were mentioned, the most common being the role of the teacher in shaping the next generation. Other aspects of teaching that were appreciated were seeing the fruits of one’s efforts in a way that “desk work” (which was often presented as the opposite of teaching) does not; teaching being interesting work that continually expands one’s mind; and being of service to one’s country. For women, as will be discussed later in this chapter, simply the act of working outside of the home was greatly valued. That said, the next chapter will describe ways in which affinity for teaching was tempered by constraints women teachers faced in actually being able to do what they believed they should and wanted to do in their work.

In addition to the commonly expressed affinity for the practice of teaching itself, it is important to acknowledge that for some, particularly those from rural and low-income households, being a teacher offered a secure job and steady, albeit low, income. At least in Addis Ababa, according to the teachers I spoke with, pay was received on time

(which is not the case in other regions and in many African countries) and teachers were guaranteed a posting, albeit not in the school or location of their choice. Given the complex ways in which family, ethnic and political affiliations are often worked to secure employment in Ethiopia, the relatively straightforward, transparent and certain path of entry into teaching is a valuable aspect of the profession, particularly for poor and rural women who may have limited networks and social capital. The still ample opportunity for secondary school teachers to be deployed in urban areas, thereby facilitating urban migration and residence, is also an attractive feature. For these reasons, some of the women interviewed indicated that they entered into teaching because of the relative security it offered. Several of these participants had lost one or both parents and were being supported by siblings whose own livelihoods were precarious. However, even for these individuals, once graduated and working they were faced with significant material constraints to achieve what they valued in life and a strong desire to further improve their circumstances. Expressions of affinity for teaching were, thus, always tempered with the fact that teaching, as valuable and satisfying as it may be, does not pay enough to live by:

Our profession is creating the future generation so this makes me happy. But if you don't have enough money to cover your own need, only loving your job is meaningless. . . . So if the situation is good I will stay in teaching throughout my life but if the situation is not good I will leave.  
[Female, Biology PGDT student]

The remainder of this chapter, then, explores what specifically young women teachers valued as part of a good life for which more income is desired. Before proceeding with this examination, a general finding worthy of note is that all of the women teachers interviewed had little, if anything, to say about overtly discriminatory practices or harassment experienced as women teachers in schools. In part, this may be

because the more subtle gender biases and discrimination in operation were considered “normal.” However, accounts of teaching experiences stood in stark contrast to accounts of undergraduate university experiences, in which study participants spoke without prompting and at length about harassment and lack of belonging experienced as women in that space. This is not to say that women teachers do not face gender bias or misrecognition in schools—as the analysis in the next chapter will demonstrate, they do—but, to highlight, the women in this study experienced working in schools, at least in terms of their relations with colleagues and as workers, as a relatively safer and in some ways more equitable environment than the university. The capability of bodily and emotional integrity, in this regard, appeared to be less compromised than in the university setting.

At the same time, however, entry into the workplace and departure from the university was accompanied for some study participants by a return into society and a greater encroachment of domestic lives. University, particularly for young women living in the dorms, served as a kind of buffer from societal norms and expectations with respect to domestic demands on their time and labor (even while they were faced with an unsupportive and at times hostile institutional environment toward women) but in returning to households upon graduation and forming new ones through marriage, together with greater expectations regarding their participation in community life as adult women, participants had more to say about gendered constraints emanating from outside the school. In contrast, school directors and MoE staff, while acknowledging in passing remarks the differing societal and family demands on women and men, insisted that the measure of equality was that all teacher policies (except maternity leave) applied equally



to both sexes. The intersection of domestic and professional lives and the male bias inherent in “gender neutral” policies, given the broader context of societal inequality between women and men, are themes that run throughout this and the next chapter.

### **Personal Functionings and Teacher Well-Being**

As described in detail above, all the teachers interviewed spoke first and foremost about the inadequacy of their salaries as the most serious problem they faced and the primary reason for their seeking to leave the teaching profession. The perspective offered by the capability approach is helpful in this respect in that it highlights, as teachers’ comments themselves revealed, that an adequate income is not a capability in its own right but a means or resource toward the attainment of other beings and doings that teachers have reason to value as part of living a “good life.” Examining what women teachers value and how they navigate and contend with constraint, serves to highlight factors that currently limit the well-being of women teachers, important in its own right and with consequence for their retention and ability to fully participate in the teaching profession.

What clearly emerges, as it did in Tao’s study of primary school teachers in Tanzania (2012), is that the functionings most valued by teachers are *basic* or *general functionings*, such as “living in a satisfactory home” and “providing for one’s family,” which pertain to their personal lives and, more specifically, to the attainment of what is considered a basic level of well-being.<sup>160</sup> Not only were such functionings considered

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<sup>160</sup> There are various usages of the terms “basic”, “general” and “fundamental” capabilities, but in Sen’s later work the term *basic capabilities* refers to “the ability to satisfy certain elementary and crucially important functionings up to certain levels” to ensure survival and to avoid serious deprivations (Sen 1992, p 45, cited in Robeyns, 2003, p. 17). Bernard Williams uses basic capabilities in a related but slightly different way to distinguish the ability, for example, to choose a new brand of washing powder from

basic to a good life, but they are intertwined and instrumental in the achievement of other significant functionings, such as independence and respect, also discussed here. Such “first-order” personal functionings were, thus, often prioritized over “second-order” professional functionings (Tao, 2013, p. 99) pertaining to the work of teaching (see Chapter 9), which were valued but considered less consequential.

While both men and women have reason to value these personal functionings, they are gendered in the ways in which, extent to which and reasons for which they are valued, with certain aspects of these functionings, such as securing adequate childcare, being valued primarily by women. It should be noted, moreover, that this is not a comprehensive or definitive list of the functionings that teachers value.<sup>161</sup> Rather, this section highlights the most prominent functionings raised during interviews and conversations about the challenges women teachers face in their lives, their aspirations and the reasons why they feel they must change their profession when they express an affinity for it.<sup>162</sup>

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appearing in public without shame (Robeyns, 2003, p. 20). Robeyns suggests that such capabilities be termed *general capabilities* to refer to “the deeper, foundational, generic, fundamental, aggregated (not over persons but over different capabilities in one person) capabilities” (ibid.). This notion of “general capabilities” is similar to what Nussbaum refers to as “central human functional capabilities” (ibid.).

<sup>161</sup> This study was not designed to specifically ask teachers about all the functionings they valued and to have them rank them or to compare women’s and men’s values (see Tao, 2012 for such a study). Ideally, identification of valued functionings and related constraints to inform policy formation would occur through a broad and participatory process of dialogue. This discussion serves primarily to highlight the utility of taking such an approach.

<sup>162</sup> For example, “being healthy” was not a functioning that teachers generally discussed, even though it is necessary for survival and instrumental to the achievement of other key functionings. This may, in part, be due to the youthfulness and relative health of the teachers in this study such that their access to low-cost basic health services in the city is for the time being adequate. This reflects how the beings and doings that individuals have reason to value may shift over time, with age and changing circumstances, and that this study is focused on young teachers in their twenties.

### **“Living in a Satisfactory Home”**

Housing is not ordinarily provided for teachers in Ethiopia and constitutes the biggest living expense for those who rent in urban areas. Consequently, securing continued access to accommodation that was adequate in size, sanitary in conditions, easily accessible and safe, weighed heavily on the minds of teachers as either an immediate or future concern and was one of the valued functionings most often discussed. Given high rental prices and land shortages, those with close relatives in the city, particularly newly qualified teachers, were living in a family home or sharing rent with siblings but were not sure if they could do so indefinitely. Several of the teachers interviewed were renting a room in the back of a shared compound, often with other renters living in attached rooms. Renters expressed concerns about their ability to secure continued access to housing because complicated leasing arrangements with house mates might fall through at any time or unexpected costs prevent timely payment. Ever-increasing rent prices, the possibility of someone else offering more for the space or the owner of the property changing plans for its use also threatened continued access to a satisfactory home.

Those having to share their rooms with others in order to afford the rent and those with children expressed the greatest concerns about lack of space. Related to space was the difficulty of working at home, for example in preparing lesson plans, accommodating domestic help (a particular concern for married women which will be discussed shortly) and in getting satisfactory rest. There were also concerns about sanitation in such cramped conditions and lack of resources to make necessary repairs. Accessibility was expressed as a concern because of high transportation costs and, particularly for women,

the need to be close to the home to care for young children. Proximity to home was the reason that at least three study participants traded their initial school assignment with other teachers. In the case of one participant, this involved being assigned to teach in a primary school but she preferred this to working far from home.

As noted earlier, women teachers did not report experiencing or feeling the threat of harassment or violence in schools and generally felt safe in that environment (unlike the experiences of female teachers in many rural areas in Ethiopia), but such threats were experienced as a constraint on where in the city and with whom women could live. For single women renting rooms with friends or in compounds with strangers, the issue of safety was particularly pronounced. Accessibility by public transportation, how far a teacher might have to walk and through which paths, were also factors women had to consider which men did not.

For several women, this constraint was evaded by living with family until they were married thus extending their dependency and their domestic duties in the home. When this was not an option, a few chose to pay much higher rent than their male colleagues to ensure that they had safe housing but then their resources for pursuing further studies and other functionings was limited and the pressure to obtain additional income increased. Two participants expressed that they lived in accommodations in which they were fearful for their safety and one participant explained that she was living with her boyfriend even though her family did not approve because she could not afford to live anywhere else. This same teacher, in her first semester of teaching, fell pregnant and because of her anxieties over not having enough money to pay her share of rent and adequately care for a child decided to have an abortion. The vulnerability of her situation

was traumatizing to her, resulting in a long absence from her first semester of teaching and considerable emotional turmoil.

Housing can, thus, be seen as necessary for survival and for expanding other capabilities, such as caring for one's family, bodily and emotional integrity, health and independence. The capability of respect was also linked to housing. Teachers, men and women, commented that part of the low status and lack of respect given to them was tied to their continued dependence on their family for accommodation (when that was an option) and the poor quality of housing and neighborhoods in which many were forced to live.<sup>163</sup>

### **“Being Respected”**

As noted above, teachers felt they were not respected by peers and other members of the community, including sometimes their own family, in part because they were constrained by their lack of income from doing things that earned respect in society, like supporting themselves and others, dressing well and, importantly for young people in Ethiopia (Mains, 2012), engaging freely in reciprocal gifting (e.g., taking friends out for coffee or dinner, etc.). The link between “being respected” and maintaining one's dress and appearance was frequently made by women teachers, some of whom noted that women are more acutely subject to judgment based on their appearance. The poor dress and unkempt appearance of teachers was often mentioned as a reflection of their poverty and low morale, with a couple of teachers observing that it can be seen that teachers

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<sup>163</sup> Anecdotes were shared by three study participants about teachers who had to “face the shame” of renting a room in the compound belonging to the family of one of their students for lack of alternatives. This predicament was contrasted to the past when teachers were distinguished for their “modern” and “stylish” living quarters (AAU faculty interviews) and was also manifested in the reluctance in the case of two study participants to discuss where and in what conditions they lived.

“have no hope for the future” and that they have “given up” by the “careless” way that they dress (teacher and AAU faculty interviews). It was evident that most of the young teachers in this study took pains not to fall into this category but were nonetheless constrained by lack of a disposable income from maintaining their dress and appearance to the degree they wished.

The functioning of “being respected” was also linked to another functioning of importance to young teachers in this study, which was “getting married.” The inability to attract a potential spouse was articulated as a problem, with both men and women teachers stating that they often avoided telling peers and potential partners that they are a teacher because it would not earn them any respect. For men, because of socio-cultural expectations about who should materially provide in a relationship, the common complaint was that most women would not consider dating them because “they say this one can’t even afford to pay for lunch” (Male, Mathematics teacher, grades 9 & 10). For the young women in this study, being a teacher was not viewed to be as big an obstacle to getting married in terms of others’ expectations of them but rather with respect to their own aspirations to materially provide for their future children and to be financially independent after marriage.

While income features prominently as a resource to achieving the functioning of being respected, there are also other dimensions at work. Notions that it is less capable students who are drawn in to teaching and that it is a job anyone can do also factored into the lack of respect teachers felt from peers and community members. Moreover, the functioning of being respected was also related to teachers’ experiences within schools and particularly their treatment by students, which will be addressed in the next chapter.

### **“Providing for One’s Family”**

Providing for one’s family (together with living in a satisfactory home) was the functioning most often and most passionately discussed by teachers and was closely tied to study participants’ sense of self-worth and standing in society. Sending money to parents and family in rural areas, supporting the education of siblings, and providing for one’s own children were among the specific aspects of providing for one’s family that were mentioned. A few of the women teachers spoke with great emotion about the support they had received from their mothers when growing up and their desire to return that support as their mothers’ aged. Two participants specifically explained how they did not want to rely on their mothers for childcare because “she has done enough” and were determined to earn enough to make other arrangements.

Many of the families of teachers interviewed expected that as employed university graduates they would at least be able to support themselves if not contribute to the family, but even several years into teaching this was not possible for most. A couple of female teachers expressed that some family members and people in their community questioned whether the investments made in their education were worth it, particularly as women whose domestic labor is highly valued and whose long-term workforce participation, if and once they have children, is doubted.

In women teachers’ narratives about their current lives and future aspirations, the symbolic act of caring for family through material provision took precedence over physical acts of caring, such as cooking, cleaning and staying home with children. Women often discussed wanting to be able to pay for their children’s private schooling and for educational resources like books, games and opportunities to participate in extra-

curricular activities, as already mentioned. What is particularly noteworthy is the way in which women spoke about this as what they, themselves, wanted to provide for their children, regardless of the contributions of a spouse, and were in this way claiming both the rights and obligations of a wage-earning professional (as well as their independence).

### **“Being Independent”**

Many participants expressed that what was expected of them as university graduates and what they desired was “to be independent” which was often tied to securing one’s own accommodation and to providing for one’s own material upkeep. While it is very common for young women in the city to live with family until marriage, several of the women teachers expressed the desire to live on their own or with friends for some time “to be independent.” One of the PGDT students expressly chose to stay in the dorms during her studies instead of with her mother because she wanted to enjoy her freedom and have more time to socialize outside the home but after graduation was obliged to return home because it was not financially feasible to do otherwise.<sup>164</sup>

As already noted, women teachers also expressed their determination to be financially independent after marriage and to be able to make choices for their children, such as to send them to private school, so that this functioning took on particular salience for women in this regard. As one teacher expressed:

I don’t care about my husband’s money because I am not dependent on him. I work day and night for my child. . . . For another person, or most Ethiopian females, they believe that they must get from him and then he becomes more than her. When she has a master’s degree and BA degree should she believe in that! Why? I don’t believe that. I work hard for my life and that’s my belief. [Female, History teacher, grades 9 & 10]

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<sup>164</sup> The option of staying in the dorms in university was made feasible because of government subsidization and the policy provision allowing her to pay her share of the cost later on or through service.



Central to independence, and related to the functionings of providing for one's family and being respected, was the intent determinedly expressed by the majority of women interviewed to continue working outside the home when married and raising children. Wary of what it would mean psychologically, intellectually and in terms of gender equality in their marriage if they were to be confined to the home, several women expressed sentiments such as this:

To be without any work is like a disease for me. At home, your mind is not busy. You remember all your problems, your pains. It is better to leave the home and work so you forget. Also to be independent a woman must work, because it is very challenging by taking money from only men. So I will continue to work even when I have children. [Female, Biology teacher, grade 9]

Some women, when the husband's income is enough they leave their work and care for their child. But some, just like me, they continue their work. I don't like staying at home. No. You are strong when you work. [Female, Civics teacher, grades 9]

The ability of women to achieve such independence by working outside the home was, however, constrained by the unequal division of labor in the household and power asymmetries that limited the extent to which they could or were willing to negotiate with spouses for more equitable sharing of domestic responsibilities. The primary way in which women contended with such constraint was one of strategic accommodation in which, while accepting the sexual division of labor in the home and wider community as given, they sought to delink themselves from the physical acts of caring and to safeguard their ability to remove themselves from the home for extended hours by engaging the labor of other females. Several young teachers discussed this as a reason for why they needed to change to a higher-paying occupation before they had children, while those

with partners who were also teachers described the difficulty of meeting such costs even with two teacher incomes.<sup>165</sup>

In general, the functioning of “being independent” was important to women teachers because it is what they expected that being a university graduate and obtaining a job would allow them to achieve as women in the face of restrictive cultural norms and expectations. Moreover, the ability to be independent was seen as instrumental to the highly valued functioning of “being respected.”

### **“Securing Adequate Childcare”**

Childcare, closely tied to being able to work outside the home and being independent, merits its own discussion because securing and following-up with childcare arrangements was viewed by the women teachers and few men participating in this study as primarily the responsibility of women.<sup>166</sup> Poluha (2004), in her ethnography of elementary school children in Ethiopia entitled “The Power of Continuity,” provocatively describes how from an early age both girls and boys internalize gendered views about the roles and capacities of men and women (for example, concluding that men are not able to cook well or care for young children). For most, such views remain unquestioned into adulthood and sustain broader patriarchal structures. So while it is acceptable for someone other than the mother to care for a young child, it is still a female that must do so and it is the mother who is responsible for making and monitoring such arrangements.

Paying for such care, either through the costly option of a private daycare, hiring someone in the home or relying on the labor of female relations, was thus seen as the

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<sup>165</sup> The majority of spouses of married participants in this study were also teachers.

<sup>166</sup> The men included in this study did not raise childcare as an issue of concern to them personally, speaking about providing for their family in general terms.

only means by which to ensure that as a mother a woman was able to work outside the home. Moreover, when it came to absenting oneself from paid work or forgoing the earning of supplemental income, it was the mother who was expected to do so. One participant, who described how her husband generally tries to help with the care of their son during the week-ends and sometimes “even with cooking,” also commented that if her son is ever sick she is the one who will miss work to care for him. Several participants also explained that they used to earn additional income through tutoring but could not keep it up after having a baby.

Without adequate material resources to pay for outside childcare or hired help, several of the teachers with young children were relying on a young female relation to assist them in the home. In the case of one of these teachers, her infant son was being watched during the day by her nine year-old niece who consequently was unable to attend school herself. The participation of a female teacher in the workforce, in this case, came at the cost of a girl’s schooling. This illustrates more generally how a focus on the advancement of individual women in the absence of broader institutional support and changes in gender relations and structures lends itself to contradictions and compromises efforts to advance gender equality and justice for all.

In this context, it was striking that school administrators and MoE staff framed efforts toward gender equality in teaching in terms of how women and men teachers are “treated the same.” When asked about whether there were any specific provisions for women teachers, the only one mentioned was maternity leave.<sup>167</sup> One female participant commented that despite the additional burdens faced by women in the home, “in the

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<sup>167</sup> Maternity leave for government employees is three months. There is no paternal leave. A few women teachers complained that this policy is very rigid, stipulating that they must take one month off before the labor and two months after, without taking the parents’ preferences or limitations into consideration.

school we are all treated the same, as if we are all men” (Female, Geography teacher, grade 9). Others described how absences from teaching duties because of domestic and social obligations—which in Ethiopia extend beyond the household to include providing labor for weddings, funerals and religious commemorations—were handled inconsistently across departments and schools, depending on the temperament and attitudes of head teachers and vice-principals, most of whom are men. Several women teachers also observed that while absences from teaching duties were common amongst male staff, these were usually related to efforts to earn supplemental income, attend job interviews or to study and take exams for outside courses, revealing again the influence of gendered norms on priorities and the unequal burden of household and social reproduction.

### **An Enhanced Capability: Being Autonomous in Use of One’s Time**

The functionings discussed above are ones teachers felt constrained in achieving, largely due to limited income. Distinct from this, a functioning that several participants discussed as being enhanced by being a teacher, rather than constrained, was “being able to use one’s extra time freely.”<sup>168</sup> In particular, government secondary schools were viewed as allowing for enhancement of time autonomy and flexibility, in contrast to primary schools (with more assigned classroom hours), private schools and work in other sectors. This is not to say that secondary school teachers did not have significant workloads or that the work is not exhausting (indeed exhaustion was a theme raised by

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<sup>168</sup> Earlier in this chapter, other aspects of teaching that enhanced personal well-being such as job security and transparency of the path into teaching and the increased bodily and emotional integrity afforded by reduced instances of sexual harassment (compared to university) were also mentioned. This aspect of relative time autonomy and flexibility afforded by teaching, however, was articulated more frequently by participants, usually framed in terms such as “at least teaching in government school, you have more time to do whatever you need to do”.

several participants). Nonetheless, many teachers in government schools were allowed, at least in practice, to come and go for short periods during regular school hours and to work on other tasks in between their assigned duties. Double-shifts are not commonly in operation in schools in Addis Ababa and formal school hours ended at 3 pm (an hour or two earlier than most offices).

This capability was valued, however, in ways that were gendered. So, for example, women teachers with children expressed the ability to go home during the day to feed their young child or to run errands related to their household work as a benefit of such time autonomy. Male teachers and some single women, on the other hand, expressed valuing this capability primarily in affording them the opportunity to study another field, look for other work or earn supplemental income.

Given the many challenges teachers faced related to their low-income, spending time on these activities took precedence for most teachers interviewed over pursuing professional functionings, such as preparing for classes, engaging with students outside of class, or investing time in extra-curricular activities. One participant, for example, had succeeded with the help of a loan from a relative in starting a small hairdressing salon near the school where she was teaching. Between her commitments at the hair salon and caring for her five year old son, she barely made it to her assigned classes and was frequently absent. This was an extreme case but a clear illustration of personal functionings being prioritized over professional functionings. Moreover, for many

participants, their responsibilities as a teacher was viewed as being limited to the boundaries of assigned classroom teaching and meetings.<sup>169</sup>

### **Occupational Immobility**

While the inability to achieve valued personal functionings described above has the general effect of pushing teachers out of the profession, there are another set of factors that constrain occupational mobility which keep women teachers in the profession. These are not “pull” factors in that they do not increase the attractiveness of being a teacher but rather limit the ability to find alternative employment, start a business or pursue another field of study.<sup>170</sup>

Most teachers in Ethiopia—men and women—face considerable occupational immobility because of the paucity of formal jobs and their limited personal resources (financial and social capital) (Broussard & Tekleselassie, 2012). This is in part why men continue to outnumber women in teaching, despite its low pay and status. Opportunities for employment in other government sectors are few relative to the number of university graduates and have become increasingly tied to political and ethnic affiliations (Mains, 2012). Several of the teachers I spoke to formally and informally had been actively seeking other employment for more than a year, a few for several years. A male geography teacher interviewed who was just about to transfer to the National Statistics Agency had been job searching for four years. A female teacher who had decided to leave

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<sup>169</sup> Most teachers were required to run at least one extra-curricular activity or club but from the responses many gave this was not a priority for them. A few commented that their club had only met a few times during the semester and a couple could not easily recall what their club was called.

<sup>170</sup> There is also the official requirement to work an equivalent number of years to university study, in lieu of paying toward the cost-sharing agreement. Study participants frequently said they would teach at least long enough to work off the bulk of their student debt. However, the implications for not doing so were usually not severe and teachers found ways to work around the system. If teachers could find better paying work, their cost-sharing obligation would not hold them back.

teaching not long into her service had only recently, after five years, received money from a relative abroad and started a hair salon. Another female teacher had completed a Master's degree and had been trying for two years to find a job with an NGO but without success.

In addition to these more general constraints, women faced particular obstacles to occupational mobility which are worth noting briefly here. For study participants, such factors related primarily to the unequal demands placed on women in the home, particularly on those married and with young children. When specifically asked what they were currently doing to change their occupation, having expressed the desire to do so, all except one of the women with children expressed that such efforts were on hold or that they were not doing as much as they wanted to because of lack of time and energy given their domestic responsibilities. In four of the six married couples, precedence was given to the husband to pursue studies in another field for this reason or because of the husband's interest and ability to enroll in a potentially more lucrative field, such as engineering or medicine. Limited material resources generally made it difficult to engage outside domestic help for both partners to invest time and money pursuing alternative fields. Such constraints faced by women as wives and mothers fed the general view that it is better to get out of teaching while still young and single.

Teachers' accounts and my own observations also suggested that the greater confidence and English language fluency of some of the men teachers contributed to their ability and willingness to approach agencies and organizations for work. Men also seemed to have wider relevant social networks on which to draw and did not face the ever-present threat of sexual harassment that exists for women in Ethiopia, particularly in

approaching men in higher positions for assistance. The risks involved and autonomy and confidence required to seek other work possibilities were, thus, generally more of a barrier for women. These factors combined to create a condition of greater immobility for some women, although certainly not all, such that their time in the teaching profession extended beyond original intentions.<sup>171</sup>

Less directly related to occupational mobility but among the factors keeping women in the teaching profession was the expectation that teachers will sustain themselves by earning supplemental income, most commonly through private tutoring, and the market preference for female tutors. Female tutors were preferred by parents because this employment usually occurred in homes and with young students.<sup>172</sup> According to teachers' accounts and informal conversations with parents, women are viewed as "better at working with young children," "more motherly" and a less disruptive presence as an outsider in the home. Because the tutees are most often elementary students there were no concerns about whether the tutor had strong subject knowledge. When asked if going into the homes of strangers was of concern to women teachers, a couple of participants replied that it was "scary at first" but others dismissed this concern stating that the families "treat me like their daughter" (Female, Biology teacher, grade 9).

This main source of supplemental income thus supports women's presence in teaching but it does so by playing on maternal associations, rather than recognizing women's professional competencies, and is often to the detriment of teachers' well-being.

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<sup>171</sup> This is not to say that all women were more constrained than men in pursuing other employment. A factor advantaging women to a limited extent seemed to be preference on the part of some employers in other sectors to hire women, largely because women were viewed as easier to manage, better at relating to customers and more diligent (based on informal conversations with four employers).

<sup>172</sup> Preference by parents for the hiring of female tutors was noted by several AAU faculty and teachers themselves, as well as evidenced in advertisements regularly found around the city highlighting the availability of female tutors.



Several participants commented that tutoring was time consuming, costly in terms of transportation, and exhausting on top of regular teaching duties. It also detracted from time that could be spent looking for other work or pursuing other studies. Women teachers who tutored described how they returned home late and were immediately engaged in work around the house with limited time to prepare for classes. One teacher also described how it was frustrating and demoralizing to see the contrast in the level of learning and home conditions of the private school students she tutored compared to those in her government school classrooms. A male teacher I spoke with, on the other hand, dismissed tutoring as an inadequate source of supplemental income, discussing instead the very limited options available for “good” part-time work and his focus on leaving the profession.

These factors, bolstered by gendered norms, roles and bias, together serve to keep women teachers in the profession even while many aspire to find other work. Teachers can, thus, be seen as caught in a tension between factors pushing them out of teaching (at present mainly constraints on personal functionings, but also professional functionings discussed in the next chapter), factors constraining their occupational mobility even though they may want to exit, and factors contributing to their affinity for and desire to remain in teaching (mainly factors enhancing their professional capabilities). To further understand these tensions and the implications for teacher engagement, the next chapter examines the *professional* beings and doings women teachers have reason to value and the factors which affect their ability to pursue and achieve these goals, giving particular attention to the gendered dimensions at play.

## Chapter 9: Early Career Experiences in Secondary School Teaching, Part 2 – The Professional Dimension of Teachers' Lives

While constraints on personal well-being was stated by teachers as the primary reason for wanting to leave the profession, their participation in and orientation toward their work was also influenced by their ability to pursue and achieve professional functionings. This chapter focuses, therefore, on the professional beings and doings that women teachers value in their first years in service, how their well-being and agency are constrained in this regard, and the implications for their participation in teaching.

Before continuing, another note on terminology is in order. While well-being, in the still nascent capability literature on teachers, has been associated with examination of teachers' *personal well-being* (see Tao, 2013, 2014), and *agency* has been the focus with respect to teachers' professional capabilities (Buckler, 2014), I refer in this chapter to both well-being and agency in the context of teachers' work because in examining lived experience it is very difficult to separate the two. While teachers may exercise agency in their work that is not immediately related to furthering personal goals and may even be of some personal disadvantage to them (e.g., spending more time with students outside of class and so having less time to do other personal tasks), being able to pursue and achieve valued professional goals (i.e., having agency in this context) is inextricably tied to their professional and overall well-being.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Buckler's primary interest in focusing on agency rather than well-being (2014) is that it makes visible the ways teachers use their agency to "uplift the lives of others" (citing Sen, 2009, p. 289) and how their values "are often focused beyond the limits of their personal well-being" (Buckler 2014, p.12). This is indeed important but I would argue that such selfless action, as it were, (and whether or not one is able to effectively pursue it) has direct bearing on well-being. Divorcing the well-being of an individual from that of others with whom she or he is connected perpetuates a false dichotomy and could be viewed as problematic on ethical grounds. It would be preferable, in my estimation, to make room for action that is

## *Professional Functionings and Teacher Well-being and Agency*

### **“Helping Students Learn”**

The teachers interviewed commonly evaluated their own worth and primary goal as teachers in terms of “helping students learn.” Exercise of agency toward furthering this goal was evidenced in various ways, including personal accounts and my own observations of teachers going beyond their mandated duties to help students with their academic work outside of class, to counsel them about school-related and personal problems, to conduct internet research to supplement basic lesson plans and enhance their own subject knowledge, and to consult with other teachers about how to improve teaching methods and overcome specific challenges. There are, of course, multiple obstacles facing teachers in Ethiopian schools in pursuing this functioning but a few featured most prominently in teachers’ accounts.

**Growing inequality and poverty of urban context:** Teachers spoke at greatest length about the difficulties of teaching students from poor families in an urban context characterized by growing inequality and psycho-social problems. Among the problems discussed were absent parents and lack of family support; abusive circumstances in homes and communities; students having to work to support their families (mainly as domestic workers, taxi assistants, shoe shiners and street hawkers) which left them exhausted, unable to focus on study and more vulnerable to abuse; student exposure and addiction to alcohol, drugs and risky sexual behavior (including secondary school boys acting as pimps and exploiting girls from their own school); and a growing questioning among youth and parents about the benefits of education in the face of high

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not focused on the self within our conception of well-being rather than to divorce such action analytically under a separate category of agency.

unemployment among graduates. As one teacher explained with respect to the latter challenge, “they [students] don’t know why they are here. They see in their neighborhood some people have master’s degrees and no job so they don’t see the point of being educated” (Female, Biology teacher, grade 9).

Such circumstances introduced challenges for teachers, in terms of students’ behavior, attitudes toward learning and ability to learn, which were seen to be far more than in the past and more than what teachers expected entering the profession. Young teachers seemed unprepared for the degree to which such problems, confronting a sizeable and growing number of their students, would inhibit their basic ability to teach. They also expressed feelings of disempowerment and disillusionment in not knowing how to address such “big problems” and feeling like their efforts could make little difference for many of their students. In this regard, teacher agency was often limited not by lack of motivation but by not being adequately equipped to address problems related to student learning and behavior stemming from broader structural constraints.

This situation manifested in teacher narratives in a tense mix of sympathy towards students, because of the problems they face, and disdain, because of their lack of responsiveness to efforts to help them that left teachers feeling ineffectual:

The student behavior and lack of motivation is a very difficult thing because when I see them behaving like this in the class and I see their grades it makes me feel like I am being useless. I don’t hate them; I want them to learn, but they are not interested to learn. If I can help them do something then I am satisfied but if it has no effect then I feel like I am just being in the class for my own sake. It is difficult for them and for me. [Female, Chemistry teacher, grade 9]

**Inadequate training and lack of institutional support and mentorship:**

Several teachers remarked that they could have been better trained and should be better

supported to do their job in such an environment. Some of the newly qualified teachers discussed how the PGDT program failed to address realities of the largely poor urban schools in which they would be teaching. The theoretical focus of the program, failure to adequately reflect on and discuss practicum experiences, and general lack of grounding in the context in which teachers have to work limited the development of skills and knowledge to achieve the desired functioning of “helping students learn.” The limited number and mandate of counseling staff to aid students was also cited as inhibiting teachers from doing the work of teaching. Disorganized and sometimes absent school administrators and head teachers were a problem in some schools, leaving teachers to handle systemic problems on their own in whatever way they could. In general, teachers described operating in a reactive mode where energy was directed toward putting out fires, limiting their ability to do more to help their students learn.

With respect to the support that might be offered through mentorship and professional development, teachers found the first to be inadequate and the latter highly varied. Teachers spoke specifically about the need for greater training on how to address special needs issues and behavioral problems. With respect to the mentoring received during their first year as a teacher, for some this was limited to a few meetings during the first month and viewed as a formality that neither teacher nor mentor actively pursued. While for a few the concrete advice and accompaniment offered by mentors who invested time in them proved very beneficial and encouraging, others had interactions and received advice that was clearly gender biased, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

**Mandated English language medium:** Another major constraint teachers faced in helping students learn was the mandated use of English. For the most part, teachers

resorted to teaching in Amharic, with occasional phrases and terminology expressed in English. One teacher described how when she first started teaching she used English but then “they were all just murmuring and laughing” so she stopped (Female, Mathematics teacher, grade 8). I asked her how the students could then manage their homework and exams, which are all in English, and she responded, “Because it is mathematics they can guess what the question is asking, but it is easy for them to mess up. This is also why they are failing.” This further eroded teachers’ sense of efficacy and fed the view that the obstacles to helping students learn are too great to overcome.

For female teachers the reverse scenario with respect to language was also experienced. In an urban context like Addis Ababa, there are some students who have good exposure to English, particularly if they attended a private English-medium primary school, and are more fluent than many of their teachers. Such students would correct their teachers’ spelling or pronunciation, inducing laughter among their classmates and further undermining teacher confidence and respect. According to some of the AAU faculty and teachers themselves, women are more subject to such treatment because their authority is already under question and in some cases they are more visibly perturbed (satisfying students with the reaction they seek). The inadequate development of the capability to speak confidently in English during university thus aggravated the difficulties many female teachers, particularly those from rural and low-income backgrounds, faced in their professional lives.

**Encroachment of domestic lives:** It is worth noting here that for teachers who were married, and particularly for those with children, lack of adequate childcare and unequal burden of domestic labor in the home also constrained their ability to pursue the

goal of helping their students learn to the degree they desired. Feeling exhausted and pressed for time such that they were less able to engage with students and to read to improve their teaching after school were commonly noted. Moreover, while collegiality among teachers was often limited even among single teachers, the ability to invest time and energy in activities with other teachers was more constrained for women with significant domestic responsibilities. Again, the issue was not one of lack of motivation but of constrained ability to pursue desired professional functionings because of gendered socio-cultural expectations of where women's labor should be invested. In navigating these constraints, teachers described feeling frustrated that, on the one hand, they were putting in great effort to do their work, often showing more commitment than other teachers with greater freedom than them, and at the same time frustrated that they were not doing enough for their students. The prevailing "here but not here" condition where so many teachers were preoccupied with finding work outside of teaching did nothing to encourage them.

### **“Managing Student Behavior” and “Being Respected”**

In the face of persistently disruptive student behavior,<sup>174</sup> “managing the classroom,” and “maintaining student discipline” emerged as the professional functioning toward which teachers’ directed much of their attention and energy. Moreover, the salience of this functioning was partly due to its connection with that of “being respected.” Student discipline was discussed both in relation to the evolving skills of the

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<sup>174</sup> This was described as a widespread and growing problem by everyone interviewed, including long-standing teaching faculty: “The school environment itself has become a major reason for leaving the profession. Look, I taught more than two decades but the student discipline, their behavior, the support system today is not encouraging to stay in schools.” (Female, AAU CoEBS faculty member and student-teacher supervisor)

teacher to manage the classroom and as a reflection of the lack of respect for teachers by society.

In this context, young women faced particular disadvantage in trying to manage classrooms and student behavior that stemmed from gender biases on the part of students, colleagues, mentors/supervisors and administrators and in the school culture in general. Furthermore, some women teachers held views that differed from the dominant approach with respect to how the functionings of managing students and being respected should be achieved. In this regard, two prominent and related dynamics were significant: the one pertaining to the gendering of the authoritative teacher body as male, the other to competing narratives of control and care.

**Teaching as an embodied practice:** The significance of teaching as an embodied practice (Braun, 2011) came to the fore in this context. Almost all the young women teachers mentioned an acute awareness of their physical size when they were in schools, which stood in contrast to the image of the commanding, physically in charge teacher that is sexed male. Women teachers were constantly reminded, moreover, of their smallness and potential vulnerability by the anxieties others expressed about how they would handle students:

When I first come to this school, the teachers say “how can you go to the classroom? Most of the students are bigger than you. How can you manage them? They will disturb you.” Even the head teacher was afraid for the women, so I was afraid. [Female, Biology teacher, grade 9 & 10]

Without the kind of forceful presence that comes with physical size, women were perceived as lacking embodied authority. Moreover, alongside this male authoritative body there stood the sexualized female body. As one teacher recounted, “When I get to enter the class for the first time the students say “Oh my gosh! She has such a body. Oh



my teacher is a kind of a model!” and then I feel shy because I think they are kind of rude boys” (Female, Chemistry teacher, grade 9).<sup>175</sup> In general, women’s appearances were under much greater scrutiny than their male colleagues which was for some a source anxiety and heightened self-consciousness.<sup>176</sup> The intersection of body politics and social class was particularly apparent in the experience of women teachers from poor and more rural backgrounds who were now subjected to the scrutinizing eye of urban teenagers.

Several newly qualified female teachers also experienced anxiety in their first year about speaking in front of a class. While this was not the case for all women, it was often presumed to be by male mentors and school administrators. Women teachers were advised to speak louder, keep their hands out of their pockets, and threaten students with various punishments. The emphasis on tone and volume can be understood as an effort to compensate for the bodily limits of size and stature and the diminished authority of the female teacher. In general, mentors offered women teachers exhortations and counsel aimed at “showing students you are serious,” highlighting by implication that women are less likely to be taken seriously. Here, focus was given to contending with the supposed individual weaknesses of women rather than challenging gender biases and transforming gender regimes in schools that perpetuate the ascribing of low status and authority to women.

**Competing narratives of control and care:** The narrative of control that predominated in many schools and the authority ascribed to the body of the male teacher was premised on the physical force that such a body could potentially exercise. As one

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<sup>175</sup> The white lab coats teachers in Ethiopia wear when teaching help in at least providing a physical marker of authority and also less of the body to scrutinize but this does not detract from the fact that the coat should not be needed.

<sup>176</sup> The same teacher explained how, “When they see my hair straight they are talking about my hair style. When they see my shoes they talk about my shoes. Then I don’t feel comfortable.”

teacher lamented, “definitely students are insulting female teachers more than men because, you know, men use force so they fear them” (Female, Biology teacher, grade 9).<sup>177</sup> The widely accepted use of the threat of force to control students stood in contrast, however, to the view of some women teachers who insisted that demonstrating care and respect was more effective in managing student behavior:

I don't know why they [some male teachers] carry a stick because you see me, I do not carry a stick. I do not kick any student. But rather I give them more respect and love. I advise them, I share my experience. So it's possible to calm your students, to bring them to your way. . . . Really, really, I'm more effective by doing this. [Female, grade 9 & 10 Biology teacher]

While none of the male teachers interviewed explicitly advocated for the use of force, their accounts placed greater emphasis on the importance of control and of maintaining distance from students:

Some students, if you talk with them too much, it's not good. You don't want to be too close. The gap should be there. Of course there are very badly behaved students so you will make serious measure, threaten them, so you can control the class. It is important to control them. [Male, Geography teacher, grade 9]

The tension between narratives of care and control were further complicated by naturalized assumptions by both sexes about the “innate” qualities and strengths of men and women (as opposed to qualities women in general may exhibit because they have been socialized to do so).<sup>178</sup> However, while almost all study participants expressed that women are suited or even better at teaching because they have a “natural” ability to be

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<sup>177</sup> By all accounts, the actual use of physical force is more common in primary schools in Ethiopia than in secondary schools, where there appears to be both stricter enforcement of regulations against such practices and greater wariness of the age, size and potential response of teenagers. Nonetheless, the threat of force continues to come into play in secondary schools and perpetuates the association of authority with physical force that students learn from an early age.

<sup>178</sup> When study participants were asked why it is important to have more women teachers and whether they thought women or men were better teachers, the initial response was often that “it makes no difference if it is a man or woman. A good teacher is a good teacher” (Female teacher, Biology teacher, grade 9) but then invariably comments followed suggesting that women were more protective, understanding and caring.

caring toward their students and listen to them, these were not the qualities or approaches that were valued in practice in many schools. In schools where the narrative of control was dominant, the purported strengths of women came to be seen as weaknesses, making women teachers supposedly less effective and less able to achieve the highly valued functioning of managing student behavior.

These biases combined with others about how women, benefitting from university affirmative action policies, lack knowledge competency and intellectual capacity. This view of women's inferiority, expressed subtly by at least one school administrator interviewed, was also shared by some students. As one teacher observed:

When we were university students, there was not equality for women and men. Even when we become teachers it is the same. When I talk to the class to try and teach them, sometimes they don't listen because I am a female. They just think that I can't teach them, they think that I don't know, don't have any idea about chemistry. The students think like that. [Female, Chemistry teacher, grade 9]

The status and authority of women teachers was in this way further compromised and their own sense of efficacy in achieving the professional functioning they had reason to value eroded, even while some were forging their own practices and in some cases winning support for them. A striking example of a young woman teacher endeavoring to navigate these constraints was that of Alemash. Alemash described facing disruptive student behavior in the classroom during her first semester of teaching and finding it very difficult to teach. She found it ineffectual to yell at students and threaten them and also believed there must be a better way, so she instituted classroom consultations in which she would ask students what helped them to learn and what they were interested in as a way to elicit their engagement. It was difficult to start this (students responded to her first attempts with derisive laughter) and when she shared what she was doing with other

teachers in her department they dismissed her as being young and naïve and warned that she would “just get kicked” by the students. Alemash described how she persisted despite the desire to abandon the school and teaching, and began to find that students were more responsive to her efforts and increasingly cooperative. Although she did not speak of it in these terms, Alemash was engaging in reflective practice, demonstrating an officially-valued capability in very constrained circumstances.

Other women teachers who had been teaching for three years or more also expressed that while gender biases and challenges were particularly acute during their first year of teaching they found ways to negotiate them and establish over time what they believed to be an equal standing with male colleagues. Such strategies included ignoring negative attitudes and demonstrating their competence through their teaching, sheer persistence so that years of experience came to trump such gender biases, and developing creative ways, akin to Alemash’s efforts, to engage students in ways that proved effective. This does not detract from the fact that women teachers have to prove themselves in ways that male colleagues do not. While some are successful in doing so, such gender biases and dynamics combine with other factors discussed here to constrain women teachers’ sense of agency and well-being in their critical first years of teaching.

### **“Being a Role Model” and “Helping Female Students”**

The professional functioning of “inspiring students to do well” or “being a role model for students,” particularly female students, was raised by several of the women teachers interviewed. These participants spoke about wanting to help their female students to learn “to be strong,” to persevere and to become financially independent because of the severe challenges confronting poor women and girls in Ethiopia. While

this featured more prominently in the accounts of some teachers than others, the potential for teachers to play this role was evident given the growing number of female secondary students in urban areas, surpassing that of boys in many schools in Addis Ababa, and the many challenges girls continue to face within and outside the school context.<sup>179</sup>

The way in which this functioning was pursued, according to teachers' own accounts, was primarily through counseling of individual girls who came to them for advice about school-related and personal problems. They also sometimes financially helped their female students with small amounts of money to purchase necessary toiletries, food, schools supplies or uniforms and were instrumental in assisting girls to access services that some schools offered. For example in one school, students facing abuse at home were aided to find alternative shelter. Two other teachers described how they arranged on their own for all-female student tutorials because they believed that the girls felt freer to participate in such a setting and they could get to better know the girls' problems.

These activities, however, were for the most part efforts of individual teachers and were difficult to sustain. Such teachers had not, moreover, received training in counseling or been assisted in developing a coherent approach to working with female students. They operated apart from formal counseling support because such services were not readily available and because the vast majority of school guidance counselors were male and the girls, according to study participants, did not always feel comfortable to go to

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<sup>179</sup> Several of the teachers reported that girls were particularly prone to fainting or falling asleep in class due to lack of food and dehydration, and of being maltreated in households where they performed domestic work. Some of the teachers talked about the dangers girls faced in the neighborhoods surrounding the school, for example in being solicited for sex and sexually harassed. None of the teachers reported sexual harassment within their schools as a problem.

them.<sup>180</sup> The way most of the teachers who spoke about this functioning expressed being able to assist students, therefore, was in the form of personal advice and counsel. This would often take the form of admonition and anecdotal examples of what not to do, as conveyed by this teacher:

So I share my experience for my students, especially poor female students. They are frustrated by silly things so I advise them to be strong. Life can change over time, if you give effort, if you are strong. Some girls, for instance, they get money from men older than them. You know that. That's not good, that's bad I tell them. [Female, History teacher, grade 9 & 10]

Teachers drew on their own life experiences, which can be very powerful, but for the most part they lacked a deep understanding of and ability to communicate with students about processes, structures and ideologies that operate in schools and society to perpetuate gender inequality. In keeping with the notion of women as innately caring and able to listen to students, teachers pursued this functioning “as if I am their mother or sister” (Female, Chemistry teacher, grade 9) and focused on the importance of girls as individuals seeking to succeed.

In pursuing this functioning of helping and inspiring female students, teachers were also constrained in their ability to participate actively in after-school clubs,<sup>181</sup> meet with students and offer tutorials by the various factors previously discussed related to overcoming first-order personal functionings and meeting domestic responsibilities. The

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<sup>180</sup> Where the school had services in place to support students, as in the case of the school mentioned above (which also had a feeding program), teachers' agency and ability to achieve this functioning was enhanced.

<sup>181</sup> A potential forum within schools for working with female students are girls clubs, which exist as part of the extra-curricular activities offered in some schools. These mainly operate as a forum for communicating information about sexual and reproductive health and distributing sanitary pads. Some teachers reported that the club was not really in operation in their school. In others it functioned in the form of drop-in hours during recess times where girls could come and get supplies or talk to a teacher. Potentially, this forum could be used to support teachers in a collective effort to more systematically and effectively address different dimensions of female student empowerment rather than leave it to individual teachers to shoulder this responsibility.

challenges of addressing disruptive student behavior also meant that intentions to attend purposefully to the participation of girls in the classroom, which some viewed as important, fell to the wayside. As already noted, very little training during the PGDT program was provided on gender-sensitive teaching methods and potential tools to use in their classrooms. Neither did existing professional development programs serve to develop teachers' valuation of their potential role as agents of social change or capabilities to effectively pursue functionings related to this, be it with regard to gender injustice or otherwise.

For the most part, school directors, AAU faculty and MoE staff alluded to the potential of female teachers to serve (seemingly by their mere presence) as role models for female students. However, in a context where the authority and status of teachers is diminished and their agency to pursue professional functionings constrained, it is questionable whether teachers, female or male, are viewed as role models. One teacher contended that “the girls do not come to talk to me or listen to me because teachers these days are not respected or admired” (Female, Biology teacher, grade 9). Another young teacher recounted students saying they did not care to go on to preparatory school because they did not see the point of “struggling just to become teachers.” It is difficult to discern to what extent women teachers in particular were disadvantaged in serving as role models, but the general lack of respect for teachers, combined with the masculinist school culture and gender biases against young women teachers described here, worked to greatly limit their ability to realize this functioning.

### **A Missing Functioning: Being a Leader**

As distinct from those discussed above, a functioning notable for its absence among the professional goals valued by women teachers was the intent to pursue a leadership position in schools or within the education system more generally. When asked, women teachers often expressed that being in leadership was undesirable. In part, this was because most were focused on leaving the teaching profession. But there were also other dynamics at play that offer insight into the constraints women teachers face and the curbing of their professional engagement and aspiration. It should be noted that only one of the fourteen schools at which study participants taught had a female director. Indeed, in 2013-14 only 11% of all directors (14 out of 110) and 10% of all vice-directors (15 out of 136) in Addis Ababa secondary schools were women (MoE, 2014).

Key amongst the concerns about leadership expressed by teachers, women and men, was that the role of school director is too political. While there have been recent reforms, for example that allow candidates to apply for the job of school director rather than being appointed, it is still viewed as a political post requiring full and active allegiance to the ruling party. Particularly given Ethiopia's troubled political history and ongoing challenges, teachers expressed aversion to contending with political pressures and attending government trainings, which were viewed more as indoctrination than professional development, on top of seemingly never-ending school problems.<sup>182</sup>

Another general view of leadership expressed was that it involves “more problems with less pay” (Female, History teacher, grade 9 & 10). School director salaries were not lower than teachers but they were not much more and, because of the extra work

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<sup>182</sup> One teacher described how teachers in her school felt antagonistic toward the director and vice-director who were themselves not long ago teachers like them, suffering similar conditions, but were now unquestioningly imposing government policies.



and hours required, leadership positions were not considered to offer a means to improve one's living. Furthermore, being granted a leadership position was viewed by many teachers as recognition of years of service and party loyalty rather than of professional competencies and skill. The status and distinction of such work was, therefore, not something to aspire toward, particularly in the face of competing domestic responsibilities. This unpopular view of school leadership was confirmed by the men I spoke with, although a couple of them (in contrast to any of the women) also commented that such positions could help one learn how to deal with people and to make important contacts, possibly leading to work outside the school with greater pay and status.

Beyond the nature and conditions of the work, women's lack of interest in pursuing leadership positions reflected an adaptation of preferences in response to gendered constraints.<sup>183</sup> Among the reasons women expressed for not pursuing school leadership roles were not wanting to have to confront people, not wanting to add problems to their already stretched lives, and fearing that their efforts would not be received well because "here, it is expected that a man will be in charge. He is the one who knows how to do the job" (Female, English teacher, grade 9).

An interview conducted with one of the school directors, in which he referenced dominant views that he did not refute, revealed such bias and a male reading of women's absence from leadership:

You know, there is this societal perception that females are low achievers and consequently that they lack something. For me, I see that they are not

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<sup>183</sup> Also emerging from interviews were conflicting views regarding preferences for the level at which women wanted to teach in secondary schools. A couple of women expressed interest in teaching grades 11 and 12, particularly because it was more "intellectually challenging" and "interesting". Others, however, expressed anxieties about teaching at this level because the students are "big and even harder to control" and "they like to challenge you" (Female, English teacher, grade 9). A further constraint to teaching at this level was the general requisite for an MA degree which, for reasons already discussed, were harder for some women to pursue than others.

as such engaged in the school. They do not take up as much responsibility as male counterparts. I do not see them volunteering for committees or looking to be department coordinators. They seem to be lacking internal confidence to tackle problems facing them. They are improving but not enough. [Male, School director]

From this perspective, women as a category are seen as “lacking” and as the problem, rather than the institutional and cultural mechanisms that reinforce their marginal position. This view also contrasts with that of many teachers and some of the faculty interviewed, who observed women teachers to be more present in schools and more diligent in performing their work than their male colleagues. By not acknowledging this conscientiousness and reliability, this school director privileged participation in leadership roles over the everyday work of teachers. The absence of leadership from among the functionings valued by women teachers can, thus, be seen to reflect the conditioning of women’s aspirations in response to gendered constraints and their absence from such positions as perpetuating inequality in the profession.

**Reluctant Acquiescence and Constructive Engagement:  
The Case of Two PGDT Students**

The experiences described above and the significance of school-level factors in enhancing or constraining teachers’ agency toward achieving professional functionings are strikingly evidenced in the cases of two PGDT graduates—Meron and Samira, first introduced as PGDT students in Chapter 7—that I will now present by drawing on follow-up interviews conducted with them seven months into their full-time teaching posts in Addis Ababa. Their contrasting experiences highlight some of the factors that contribute to the development of two different orientations to teaching and responses to

occupational immobility, one that may be characterized as a “reluctant acquiescence” and the other as “constructive engagement.”

**Meron**, as may be recalled, graduated with a BSc in Mathematics. At the time of this study, she lived with her mother and was supported by her older brother so that she had no major financial obligations. Meron was encouraged by her mother to enter the PGDT program and, while not her first choice of occupation, was determined when I first met her to make the best of teaching and to make a difference in her students’ lives (unlike many of the teachers she saw around her growing up). Her experience during the PGDT program was not encouraging but she was still committed by the time she graduated to teach for at least the coming five years.

When I met with Meron seven months after she started teaching full-time, her attitude toward the profession and desire to work as a teacher had much deteriorated. Despite being trained to teach at the secondary level, she was assigned to grade 7 and 8 mathematics at a primary school.<sup>184</sup> This was not itself a disappointment to Meron who was convinced that teaching older students would be even more challenging than what she was confronted with now: “I am thankful in my heart that they [the students] have not yet kicked me but they use very bad words,” she explains. “I don’t know how I would manage the grade 9 and 10 students if the primary students are like this.”

The primary school in which Meron teaches is located in a particularly marginalized community, surrounded by dilapidated shanty homes. There is a large

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<sup>184</sup> It is fairly common for teachers who are qualified to teach at the secondary level to be assigned to second cycle primary classes (grades 5-8) to fill vacant positions. Women are also under-represented at this level but not to the same degree as in secondary schools. According to the Addis Ababa Education Bureau director the lottery for sub-city and school assignment is “gender-blind” and secondary school teachers are assigned according to openings in different subject areas to both secondary and upper primary levels. To have a qualified secondary school teacher such as Meron teaching grade 8, however, is incoherent with policies and efforts to increase women’s secondary school representation, particularly in subjects such as mathematics where women are very much under-represented.

garbage dump next to the school where students often jumped the wall to escape classes. Drug and alcohol abuse are common among students and their attitudes towards teachers very negative. “The students here are simply not motivated, not interested, especially in mathematics,” Meron complains. “They are not listening to me. I don’t know how to do my work sometimes.” Feeling that nothing she does has a lasting effect on students’ behavior, she explains that “when they don’t come or they are rude, I just pass their names to the administrator. But the administrators are not really doing anything either.” She concludes that “the students seem only to respond to beating” and observes that students are afraid of the male teachers because they threaten to use force. “But if I carried a ruler or hit them,” she remarks, “it will just get worse for me.” She also recounts how at first she tried to contact the parents but then gave up because “many of them live very difficult lives. You feel sorry when you hear their life so now I just don’t want to call them.”

Meron further described a school context in which the administration was largely absent and dysfunctional and the support she receives as a new teacher extremely limited. The mentor she was assigned met with her only once and the math department was not regularly meeting. When Meron was first assigned to her class she didn’t know where to get textbooks or a class list and relied on other teachers who were friendly and willing to help. The vice-director of the school responsible for teachers was frequently absent due to illness and she only met the school director once when she first came. She was not introduced to the staff nor was there any sort of organized orientation for new teachers. When I asked her about opportunities to meet with her department head or consult with others about the challenges she faces, Meron remarked:

These kinds of things are not practiced here. There are over 3,000 students and 112 teachers. The administration is only concerned with the paperwork. They just want you to fill out the lesson plan, report statistics. They just care about what it looks like on paper not in the classroom.

When she first started teaching, Meron stayed in the school compound for the full day but then noted “how it [the school administration] is not as much serious” and “they are not paying attention to me” so when she had time between classes she started to go home to rest. She was eager to start tutoring or picking up other part-time work but had not found anything when we met. She describes how “99% of the teachers” in the school are hoping to find another job and many are studying something else. “The men are particularly careless,” she reports. “They are not even showing up on time to classes.” Meron herself is now contemplating studying another field and looking for other work. However, she does not have enough resources to pay off her cost-sharing to enroll in another degree.<sup>185</sup> In these circumstances, Meron feels shaken in her original commitment to teach for several years:

To be honest, I don't want to be here for long. I don't hate to teach but the salary is too low and then when you see the students' behavior and their grades it's not encouraging. I feel like I am just being useless..... It's just when I came here that I realized I have made a mistake to choose teaching. But right now I can't see the possibility of studying another course or finding a better job, so right now I'm just waiting, just waiting to see what I can do with my life.

Meron's response to her present occupational immobility and the constraints she faces in achieving what she values as a teacher is what I characterize as *reluctant acquiescence*. She remains diligent in trying to teach her assigned classes but is not

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<sup>185</sup> One of the male teachers at the school who is Meron's friend, seeing her discontent, suggested that he could introduce her to his Ethiopian friend living in the United States who is interested in getting married. Meron, however, does not believe that “creating another bigger problem to solve this one” was any kind of solution, explaining that “I want to live my life for myself” and “I want to support my family but not by any means.” She did not graduate with a degree in mathematics, she states, to resort to marriage as a solution to her problems.

encouraged or supported in doing much more. The alienation she sees among other teachers around her toward the profession also makes her feel like she has “made a mistake” and is now stuck. She expresses this reluctant acquiescence again in her final reflections: “I don’t hate my life. That would be like hating myself. So I am trying to like what I am doing and then strive for something better than teaching.”

**Samira** graduated with a BSc in Biology. She lives with her parents and younger siblings in their family home in Addis and, like Meron, is not solely dependent on her teacher salary for survival. Samira’s brother encouraged her to enter the PGDT program but when I first met her, she was also enrolled in a public health extension course and viewed teaching as a “back-up” and interim occupation. Despite showing great aptitude for teaching during her practicum, Samira was determined not to teach for more than a year or two so that she could be financially independent and pursue her interest in health.

When I met Samira seven months after she started teaching, her views about the profession were much more positive and her experience better than she had expected. The school environment in which Samira found herself was notably different from Meron’s. Samira was assigned by lottery to a well-established government secondary school (offering grades 9 and 10) in the center of the city. The student population is a mix of children from low-income families whose parents have very limited formal schooling and those from lower middle-class families with more education. Samira describes having faced challenges with student behavior when she first started teaching but explains that she has since developed a good relationship with her students and feels competent in performing her work.

More than anything else, Samira feels supported by the school administration and her department. “The administrators are very serious here about the students’ behavior and academics,” she explains. “Anything that can happen, they work with you to solve the problem immediately, so I like it. . . . If there is some problem, they can discuss with the teacher, the students and parents.” Her colleagues in the Biology department also go out of their way to offer her assistance and guidance: “When I first started, a female teacher came to find me. She says are you new? She introduced me to others and showed me around.” As one of only two women in her department, this helped Samira feel more at ease. Samira was assigned a mentor with whom she met regularly during her first three months and also received positive feedback from the supervisor who observed her classes. Beyond that, she reported that in her department:

We regularly meet to discuss our classes and consult on problems. Also at the end of the month we have a celebration. We contribute some money and we have lunch. If there is a challenge we can talk together. If we have suggestions, we discuss. Also we enjoy our time together. I like this very much. My staff members help me. They care about their students. . . . If they were not there, I wouldn’t like to be here.

Samira also describes having a good relationship with the director and vice-directors. Although she has not had cause to meet with them often, she feels their positive presence in the school. This began with a much-appreciated orientation for new teachers, during which they were formally welcomed and shown round the school. After that, Samira felt there was an open channel of communication with the administration, and through her department head she receives messages and general guidance about what is expected of her as a teacher. “I am so happy about the administration in the school,” she remarks again. “Here they are very serious. In this place I feel free.”

This freedom that Samira describes was not the experience that Meron had of being able to come and go during the day because no one cared or paid attention to her. It was the freedom to actively pursue and be supported in pursuing the goals she felt to be important to her work. Samira reports that she and most of the teachers in her school stay on the compound beyond their assigned classes (even though in this school many were studying other courses as well). Unlike Meron, who described having a lot of time on her hand, Samira reports being busy and sometimes staying late to do work. At the end of the day, she often goes to internet cafés to do online research for her classes and spends additional time in the evening preparing for her lessons.

Samira also believes in the importance of knowing her students personally and developing a relationship of respect with them. She explains that corporal punishment was not used in the school but some teachers shouted and threatened the students a lot. Her view is that the students do not respond well to this and instead she tries to win over their trust through humor and individual attention.<sup>186</sup> Her efforts in this direction have proved effectual, garnering praise and encouragement from colleagues and supervisors.

Samira's school environment is also one which values and systematically fosters relationships with parents. She describes how, as a home room teacher, she regularly communicates with the students' parents, giving her phone number to those who are unable to physically come in to see her. Although this is time-consuming and sometimes exhausting, Samira is gratified by the positive response of parents and the school administration. Developing relationships with parents is a functioning also highly valued

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<sup>186</sup> For example, Samira made the effort to learn the names of her students, which is not common in Ethiopia (usually students are called out by number from a list) and describes how, "When the supervisor came to see he is surprised about this. The students also like it, they feel happy. They feel that the teacher knows me, she cares about me."



by the MoE, but unlike Meron who acts without support and eventually decides not to pursue this functioning, Samira benefits from a school culture in which such relationships are encouraged and patiently cultivated.

Being positively challenged and feeling like she is helping her students learn are part of what Samira conceives of as a good professional life. The one reason Samira sees to pursue an occupation other than teaching is the low salary, but she nonetheless has decided to set aside completing her public health degree for the time being. She describes how it was difficult to manage her own coursework and do all she wants to help her students learn. She also realizes that prospects for finding work in the public health field are limited so, for now, she is willing to prioritize her teaching. Samira's orientation to teaching and response to occupational immobility can be described as a *constructive engagement*. Her choices are limited, as they are for most young graduates, and she is aware of that. But unlike Meron, Samira does not feel "stuck" from the start of her career or that her decision to pursue teaching "was a mistake." "It is only that you do not have enough money," she explains, "but this job it can give you satisfaction. When you are interested and feel free, you can find solutions to problems working with other people. I am not disappointed about this one. I like the job."

Unlike Meron who experienced a reverse movement, Samira shifted from a reluctant acquiescence about teaching for a year or two to wanting to devote more time to her teaching duties and willingness to continue with the profession long-term. Her agency was directed toward helping her students learn and she was supported by a school administration and collegial culture that enhanced her freedom and ability to achieve what she valued professionally. Over time, what she values personally and professionally

and the constraints she faces may well shift but she has emerged from a formative period of her career with a constructive orientation that bodes well for her continued engagement in the profession.

Most of the teachers in this study described experiences akin to Meron's and could be seen to have adopted a *reluctant acquiescence* to being "stuck" in teaching, at least until they finish studying another field or find other work. A minority were at the more extreme negative end of the spectrum and could be characterized as being *disengaged*, such as Frehiwot who expressed little joy in teaching, was frustrated with the low pay and poor student behavior and decided after the birth of her son to start her own hairdressing business, resulting frequent absences from the classroom. Those with an orientation of *constructive engagement* to teaching were even fewer but Samira was not the only one. Alemash, whose experience with classroom consultations was described earlier, received encouragement after some time from a newly appointed female director who inspired her to continue with her efforts. Another teacher, Marta, who was in her fifth year of teaching, expressed great affinity for her work and determination to continue for the long-term. Marta's school conditions were not as good as Samira's but she developed close relationships with her geography students and believed she was effectual in helping them learn. She was also determined to find ways to more fully engage students and described actions such as approaching the school director to apply for land from the local *kebele* (city administration) to obtain a plot for school agriculture projects. She explained how while she and her husband, a private school teacher earning about twice her income, struggled at times financially they were determined to stay in the

profession. “When you feel you are making a difference,” Marta explains, “it is worth it to continue.”

### **Discussion and Conclusion of Chapters 8 & 9**

In these two chapters, the experiences of young women teachers in their early careers were discussed by examining the personal and professional “beings and doings” that they expressed having reason to value and the factors constraining their pursuit and achievement of these functionings. The well-being and agency of women teachers in this regard were found to affect intent to stay in the profession, response to the common experience of occupational immobility, and engagement in teaching. While describing capability constraints that pertain to all teachers, these chapters did so through the eyes of women, revealing the ways in which disadvantage experienced as a teacher and as a woman intersect, so as to disrupt the norm of the single male teacher that features prominently in policies and the mindset of school administrators.

For women teachers, aspects of gender—the patriarchal division of labor in the home with its related norms and expectations, the prevalence of violence against women in society, biases about women’s capacities and “innate” qualities and the ascribing of teacher authority to the male body—featured as social conversion factors working to women’s disadvantage. With respect to personal functionings, for example, it was found that single men could more easily convert the limited income they received as teachers into safe and adequate accommodation because they did not face the same threat of sexual violence or damage to their reputation in sharing living quarters with strangers or residing in less secure areas. With respect to professional functionings, the authority of women teachers was undermined and their agency to use alternative means limited by the

preferred use of physical force, or the threat of it, to address disruptive student behavior and by biases against women's intellectual abilities and competence. Similar to the experience in university, the problem was presumed to be with women rather than recognizing gender biases as a conversion factor limiting the ability of women with the same qualifications, in the same school, wearing the same teacher coat, being able to manage their classroom and teach.

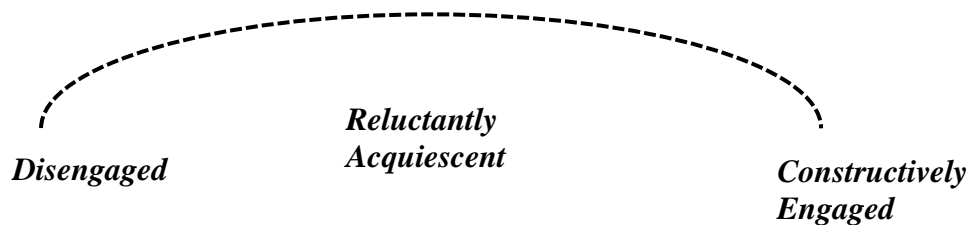
Because of the very meagre income available to most teachers, it was found that many teachers prioritized pursuing and enhancing their ability to achieve personal functionings basic to their well-being above the achievement of professional functionings. This was evident both in more immediate ways of prioritizing time and energy toward securing supplemental income and caring for one's family when outside help could not be secured, as well as in an orientation toward the future where many teachers were focused on finding other employment, studying another field or starting their own business. Gender clearly influenced what young women teachers valued and why, with the achievement of many personal functionings being tied to efforts to gain equality. For these women, being a university graduate and working was meant to allow them to independently provide for their families, to claim more of a life outside of the home and to be respected. The limited ability to achieve these valued personal functionings was the main reason given for why they intended to leave the profession.

The prioritization of personal functionings does not, however, mean that teachers did not also value and pursue professional functionings. Indeed, there was ample evidence of teachers endeavoring to "help students learn," "being a role model" and struggling to "manage the classroom" under very difficult circumstances. In this regard,

experiences of women teachers in their early career can be seen to affect what they understand to be possible with respect to pursuing and achieving valued professional functionings. This in turn influences their response to occupational immobility and orientation toward teaching and their exercise of agency into the future. Analysis of the research findings suggest that teachers move in both directions along a continuum of responses to occupational immobility, depicted in Figure 1,

- Ranging from *disengaged*, characterized by frequent absences, unfulfilled duties and active pursuit of exit;
- To *reluctantly acquiescent*, in which teachers do enough to remain in good-standing as teachers but little more and wish to exit but may not be actively pursuing it or are doing so in ways that do not interfere with their teaching;
- To *constructively engaged*, in which teachers are motivated and committed participants in the profession, are no longer seeking exit, and are exercising agency toward the further achievement of professional functionings because they have experienced this to be possible.

**Figure 1: Simple Spectrum of Teacher Orientations from Negative to Positive**



The cases of Meron and Samira and other teacher accounts illustrate, moreover, how such orientations are *not fixed but can shift over time in both directions*.

Examples of disengagement are apparent in the stereotype of the unmotivated, opportunistic, poor quality teacher that features prominently in policy documents and in the “single story” recounted in Chapter 7. The focus here, however, has been on reluctant acquiescence and constructive engagement, the factors contributing to the adoption of these orientations and the shifts between them. This is because they represent a space for maneuver in which fuller participation of women teachers, and the enhancement of their professional well-being and agency, can be pursued. This side of the spectrum is also where most of the women teachers interviewed were found to be positioned, indicating that there is much potential in working with women teachers.

It can also be concluded from the findings presented here that the teachers in this study were not as such opposed to the officially-valued capabilities and functionings promoted by the MoE as they were unable in many instances to pursue and realize them. For example, reflective practice and the officially-valued functioning of building relationships with parents as noted above were valued by teachers but how to pursue and realize them given the realities of urban schools and classrooms in Ethiopia left many teachers confused and feeling disempowered when their efforts failed. Teachers’ agency in effectively pursuing the functioning of helping female students—valued by teachers and the MoE—was also limited in various ways. Arrangements in schools, moreover, did not encourage collective action, for example in working through girls’ clubs to more systematically address the challenges facing female students or to advocate for the allocation of needed resources (e.g., more female counselors).

Similarly, the under-development of capabilities of practical reason, voice, confidence and competence in language resulting from disadvantages experienced during

undergraduate study, PGDT training and in the lack of effective professional development can be seen, at least for some women teachers, to continue to pose challenges into teaching and to undermine respect, autonomy and the exercise of leadership. The failure to ensure opportunities and freedoms during university and training to afford women epistemic access and engagement and to develop key capabilities through HE clearly have long-term consequence into workforce participation.

At the same time, there were ways that women teachers in this study exercised agency and demonstrated capabilities, within the constrained circumstances they faced and in response to the biased gender regimes in their schools, which stood out. Some teachers, like Samira and Alemash, were forging new practices and ways of relating to students that were characterized by respect and an ethic of care even while in many schools teachers were expected to be more like police. Whether because of capabilities developed through socialization and fulfilling caregiving roles expected of women or out of necessity because threat of physical force was not as readily an option to them, these women teachers valued and were successful, at least to some degree, in finding alternative ways to work with students and foster engagement.

Highlighting care where women teachers are concerned can play easily into a teacher identity associated with motherhood and is as such problematic for some feminist scholars (Carvalho, 1996; Fischman, 2000). When it contributes to essentializing women and reinforces presumptions about women's "natural" qualities, a focus on caring can further gender biases and limit women's professional roles. But at the same time, care and respect are important aspects of the relationship between teacher and learner (Buckler, 2012; Noddings 1984, 2012), particularly in conditions where students are

experiencing extreme capability deprivation outside of school and where the relationship between teachers and students has become strained. It is hard to envision how the emphasis on student-centered learning that has become so prominent is to have any meaning in the Ethiopian context without teachers being encouraged to be less like police and more like caring educators.

Furthermore, recognizing the importance of care does not have to translate into fostering relationships of dependency that are unidirectional and potentially exploitative (Davion, 1993; Hoagland, 1990) nor take a narrow focus on the individualized practice of teachers who try to develop caring relationships with students in isolation, which can be problematic (Fischman, 2000).<sup>187</sup> Valuing caring can be conceptualized and should ideally be promoted as part of a broader institutional culture of respect for students and concern for human development (Haq 1995; Walker & Mclean, 2010) that is also concerned with justice and autonomy for educational actors (Held, 1995). Within such an environment, women teachers like Samira and others in this study can play an important role in transforming the practice of teaching to the benefit of all involved.

From the analysis of findings presented in this chapter, two broad conclusions can, thus, be drawn that are worth highlighting here: one is that the extent to which women teachers' personal and professional capabilities are constrained or expanded influences their desire to remain in the profession and the nature of their engagement for the duration they do teach. The other related conclusion is that the numbers alone—representation and rates of attrition of women teachers—do not tell a clear story. They tell us very little in fact about women's real advantage (or disadvantage) in working as

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<sup>187</sup> Particularly in a context where social service provision and support for students outside the school is severely lacking and sorely needed, allowing teachers to teach and not also expecting them to be full-time social workers is important.



teachers and about conditions within the profession that allow (or hinder) women's full participation. So, while some women may stay in the profession (contributing to the goal of increased representation) this may not be because it is to their advantage and what they want but because they have few other options and their capability for occupational mobility is seriously constrained (often more so than men's). Conversely, young women may leave teaching not because they cannot teach well or have an aversion to teaching but because being a teacher means serious constraints to their well-being (resulting in capability deprivation) and so they direct agency towards exit. Both of these are at work in the Ethiopian context. The value of qualitative research focused on the experience of women teachers is that it opens up this black box, revealing common conditions and important variations, as well as the differing capabilities and choices of women as they respond to the conditions they face.

## Chapter 10: Recommendations and Conclusion

The preceding chapters provided an analysis and discussion of the findings related to the two central research questions of this dissertation: 1) How are women constrained in becoming and working as secondary school teachers in Ethiopia; and 2) In what ways do women exercise agency in relation to these constraints. These questions were considered at each of three stages—undergraduate university study, post-graduate teacher education and early years of teaching—drawing on a capabilities framework through which the well-being and agency of women teachers at each stage were examined. In this chapter, I offer recommendations emerging from these findings that could serve to advance the greater inclusion and full participation of women in the teaching profession in urban Ethiopia. Finally, I consider some areas for future research and review the main conclusions that can be drawn from this study.

### **Recommendations for Each Stage**

These recommendations are primarily directed toward the MoE, university administration and faculty, regional bureaus of education and school administrators, as well as the donors that fund their and contribute to the shaping of their agendas.

#### **Undergraduate University Education**

Chapter 6 highlighted some of the capabilities that emerged as critical for successful and equal participation of women in HE and for life beyond university.<sup>188</sup> It also revealed the role of gendered norms, biases and discrimination, and the intersection

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<sup>188</sup> The capabilities highlighted were: autonomy, knowledge and imagination, learning disposition, social relations and networks, respect, dignity and recognition, emotional integrity, bodily integrity, language competence and confidence, and voice.

of gender with other social and environmental factors in limiting the ability of women to convert resources such as a place in university, access to instruction and instructors, educational materials, and housing into valuable capabilities.

As a general recommendation, this analysis points to the value in establishing an inclusive and systematic process for HE communities to determine for themselves: (1) which capabilities there are good reasons to value and should be developed through HE (determining what matters and reframing education aims in terms of capabilities) and (2) what the institutional conditions and educational arrangements look like that allow for the enhancement of (o- and s-) capabilities of all students. The aim of this process would be not only to determine what is needed and what works in a generic sense but to ask “works for whom, under what conditions, and why?” (Walker, 2006a p. 141) in order to address equity and equality beyond formal access. Having identified which capabilities matter, it is necessary to assess on a continuing basis how institutions are doing practically in fostering these capabilities for currently disadvantaged groups such as women. Collecting reliable, disaggregated (quantitative and qualitative) data on student capability (not just access, retention and completion rates) becomes all the more important in this regard.

Particularly with respect to the challenging first year of university study, the findings of this dissertation point to the need for basic “good practices” (see Chickering & Gamson, 1987) in HE institutions to support student engagement and epistemological access. Key among these is creating a delicate balance of challenge and appropriate support and clearly making known expected codes of conduct for everyone in a learning community. To this end, academic staff working with first year students need to be trained with skills to achieve this balance and recognize its importance. Students would

benefit, for example, from being taught during their first year strategies and skills to fulfill educational goals and to use their time well. Faculty need, moreover, to communicate high expectations and treat students with dignity and respect, not view the first year as an opportunity to “weed-out” those considered “unsuited” for HE.

Whatever the existing quality of basic education available to rural and low-income students, HE institutions should start where students are currently at and help them move forward, particularly if affirmative action policies are to have any effect beyond widening access. This is not about entry requirements or academic standards but supporting the development of all students. As capability deprivation of female students both precedes and follows entry into university, what happens before students enter university clearly also matters. Learning from research like that of Wilson-Strydom (2012), which illuminates the importance of collaborating with feeder secondary schools to prepare disadvantaged students for HE and doing this with core capabilities in mind, would be valuable.

Supporting university teaching and pedagogies linked to capability enhancement and justice is, thus, of central importance. The question becomes what could university teaching look like when gauged against a multi-dimensional grid of capabilities arrived at through a participatory process by those affected? What can pedagogy look like if it is understood that it usually serves as “a relay for normalizing relations of power, which can be interrupted so that equity and transformation possibilities emerge” (Walker, 2006a, p. 144)? Linking justice to pedagogy, Walker notes that “power permeates pedagogy but that inequalities of power ... between lecturers and students and students and students need (should) not be oppressive if we recognize the fostering of student capabilities as

core to a progressive pedagogical project” (ibid.). This reflection on and refinement of pedagogical practice could then be a central part of the development of communities of practice and of faculty professional development programs.

None of this is possible, however, when participation in HE results in un-freedom for women students. The persistent fear of sexual harassment and its continuing incidence, particularly in more remote HEIs, should not be tolerated. As this study showed, it undermines for women almost all the critical HE capabilities that should be developed. Much work is needed, therefore, to improve current approaches to addressing sexual harassment, to counter the backlash of faculty and others who believe it is a thing of the past, and to support Gender Offices in their roles to address not only these more extreme manifestations but also other prevalent gender biases and discriminatory practices. The Gender Offices have an important role to play, particularly when embedded within colleges and departments, but cannot do so if they remain understaffed, ill-resourced and lack strong leadership and coherent strategies. The need for organizational development and implementation of approaches that are not merely reactionary in nature is clearly evident (e.g., piloting programs that can help prepare students prior to starting their formal university program rather than as “retention” programs after they have struggled and failed; and supporting and helping to broaden participation in collective actions aimed against gender discrimination). Gender offices should also not be expected to function as the go-to unit for all equity concerns. Concern for equity and equality should be owned institutionally across the board and a focus on the capability freedom and development of women in HEIs be maintained as a central priority.

## Teacher Education

Underpinning many of the problems confronting the PGDT program that were described in Chapter 7 is a situation in which the majority of students entering it view teaching as an unrewarding and undervalued occupation that they plan to leave. Much of their attention is focused on how to achieve basic personal well-being (for themselves and their families) given the poor material conditions of teachers' lives and escalating costs of urban living in Ethiopia. Teaching, however, is a profession that demands an "other regarding" social consciousness, particularly one might argue, in contexts characterized by poverty where the need for teachers to support the human development of students is so great and where their compensation for such work is likely to be slow in reaching adequate levels. This is a dilemma the PGDT program and MoE have not adequately addressed.

So on the one hand, what is needed is to address the poor conditions of in-service teaching, which is the focus of the next section. An important corollary, however, is to aid pre-service teachers to develop capabilities that will allow them to act as "public-good professionals" (Walker & McLean, 2010). Sen refers to this as a social justice imperative that involves "linking responsibility to effective power" (2008, p. 335). He argues that "capability is a kind of power and it would be a mistake to see capability only as a concept of human advantage, not also a concept in human obligation" (2008, p. 336). Walker and McLean take up this position and link it to the notion of an ideal-typical professionalism (Friedson, 2004; Sullivan, 2005) that emphasizes working for the public good and using one's effective power for the capability expansion of those whom one has

a responsibility to serve. Such a professionalism is in crisis everywhere as self-interest and technical rationality, among other factors, take their hold. They argue, however, that professional education remains a key site “where an ‘other-regarding’ social consciousness might be fostered through educational arrangements and policy, even in the face of history and social constraints” (2010, p. 852).

The project of Walker and colleagues (2009, 2010) in South Africa entitled “Higher education and poverty reduction: The formation of public-good professionals in universities” provides an example of how an evidence-based and theoretically informed index might be developed through a participatory process by which programs aiming to develop public-good professionals can be evaluated and guided. Such an index involves identification of professional capabilities needed to act as a public-good professional, education arrangements and institutional conditions that foster formation of such capabilities, and social constraints that act as obstacles. Table 10 details the eight capabilities identified through participatory research across five educational sites in South Africa that emerged from that project. These capabilities include: informed vision; affiliation; resilience; social and collective struggle; emotions; integrity; assurance and confidence; and knowledge, imagination and practical skills. Among the educational arrangements highlighted through their research were curriculum, pedagogy, encouraging professional ways of being, and supportive departmental cultures. University-wide conditions identified as important to such a project included addressing institutional culture; advancing criticism, deliberation and responsibility; social engagement; and building leadership, planning and operations that support just futures (Walker & McLean, 2010, pg. 858-9).

**Table 10: Capabilities of “Human Development Public-Good Professionals”**  
 [Proposed as part of a multi-dimensional index for professional university education in South Africa]

<b>Professional capability</b>	<b>Involves, for example:</b>
<i>Informed vision</i>	Understanding how the profession is shaped by historical and current socio-economic-political context nationally and globally; understanding how structures shape individual lives; being able to imagine alternative futures and improved social arrangements
<i>Affiliation (solidarity)</i>	Accepting obligations to others; care and respect for diverse people; understanding lives of poor and vulnerable; developing relationships and rapport across social groups and status hierarchies; communicating professional knowledge in an accessible way; courtesy and patience
<i>Resilience</i>	Perseverance in difficult circumstances; recognizing the need for professional boundaries; fostering hope; having a sense of career security
<i>Social and collective struggle</i>	Community empowerment approach/promoting human rights; contributing to policy formulation and implementation; identifying spaces for change/Leading and managing social change to reduce injustice; working in professional and inter-professional teams; participating in public reasoning/listening to all voices in the ‘conversation’; building and sustaining strategic relationships and networks with organizations and government
<i>Emotions</i>	Empathy/narrative imagination; compassion; personal growth; self-care; integrating rationality and emotions; being emotionally reflexive
<i>Integrity</i>	Acting ethically; being responsible and accountable to communities and colleagues; being honest; striving to provide high-quality service
<i>Assurance and confidence</i>	Expressing and asserting own professional priorities; contributing to policy; having confidence in the worthwhileness of one’s professional work; having confidence to act for change
<i>Knowledge, imagination, practical skills</i>	Having a firm, critical grounding in disciplinary, academic knowledge; valuing indigenous and community knowledges; having a multidisciplinary/multi-perspectival, stance; being enquiring, critical, evaluative, imaginative, creative and flexible; integrating theory and practice; being problem-solvers; open minded

Source: Walker & Mclean, 2010, p. 856-7

The point is not that the same index be adopted for the PGDT program, nor is it to make light of the severe political and institutional constraints that exist, but to suggest that a similar participatory process of developing and implementing such a multi-faceted index might be undertaken in the Ethiopian context so as to allow focus on those capabilities teachers need to effectively serve their students and the conditions that foster development of these capabilities. The current formulation of officially-valued objectives



for the PGDT program, which can loosely be conceptualized as capabilities (knowledge, professionalism, lifelong learning, reflective practice, research, equity promotion and policy knowledge and participation (see Chapter 7)), are useful but inadequate and divorced from discussions of pedagogy, curriculum and departmental cultures of education colleges. The capability of professionalism, in particular, merits this further deepened examination and means for evaluation.<sup>189</sup>

The value of engaging in discussions about public-good professionalism and the development of such an index, similar to what was recommended above for undergraduate education, partly lies in the participatory nature of the process and its embeddedness in the realities of HEIs and schools in Ethiopia. If the dialogue is open, frank and truly inclusive it could serve as an opportunity to re-engage faculty, many of whom, as this study showed, no longer feel ownership or real investment in teacher education. The discussion, however, would need to move beyond debating technicalities and the best modality for teacher training, to focus on creating a common vision and understanding of what public-good professional education involves in the context of quality teaching in Ethiopia. If such a process was contextualized, giving close consideration to the conditions in Ethiopian schools and to teachers' experiences, it would also serve to counter what is at present a largely abstract and theory-driven training program. The aim of employing such an index, moreover, is to have a measure by which to evaluate the progress of institutional transformation in relation to professional education for human development and to allow for refinements that further

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<sup>189</sup> The focus here has been on the PGDT program as a professional development program but an orientation toward serving the public good needs also to be cultivated earlier, certainly at the undergraduate level, and through a university-wide institutional culture (Walker & McLean, 2010), as well as through on-going professional development involving in-service teachers.

this goal, working with what exists to make incremental advances—again, along the lines of what was proposed for undergraduate training. This is very different from a perpetual process of reform that is driven from above (and outside) (Tessema, 2007) and is divorced from learning generated through experience.

In this context, it is moreover important to give specific attention to the issue of gender equality. Walker and colleagues focus on how professionals can advance human development in conditions of poverty. This is certainly of relevance to the Ethiopian context but so are entrenched systems of patriarchy that have systematically disadvantaged half the population. There is much to be learned about the capabilities that would enable teachers, women and men, to effectively advance equity in their classrooms and transform the gender regimes of schools. The teacher education program, moreover, should address capabilities that women teachers need in order to overcome pre-existing disadvantage, for example with respect to language competency and confidence, voice and autonomy, and the kinds of social constraints they will likely face in the profession. Professional development for PGDT faculty should, furthermore, raise their awareness about the detrimental effects of the single story so often told about pre-service teachers today and actively address faculty biases with respect to gender, class and other markers of difference.

### **Early Teaching**

The dynamics described in this dissertation of teachers' early career experiences point to the need for a two-pronged approach to addressing women's disadvantage and fostering their full participation as teachers. This two-pronged approach involves *simultaneously* addressing constraints on (1) what teachers have reason to value as basic

to a good life for themselves and their families (personal well-being) and (2) teachers' freedom to pursue and ability to achieve valuable professional functionings (professional well-being and agency). Addressing the former frees up energy, time and mental space to engage in the latter. Addressing the latter, has the potential to increase constructive engagement in the occupation and the willingness to continue in a materially less lucrative profession in service to the public. To increase the inclusion of women in the teaching profession, moreover, requires attentiveness to gendered differences in what is valued and employing measures that address the ways in which gender acts as a conversion factor in the achievement of personal and professional functionings.

**Enhancing the personal well-being of teachers:** With respect to the personal well-being of teachers, adequate housing emerged from teachers' accounts as a prioritized functioning, linked to several basic or fundamental capabilities, for which lack of income was cited as the major resource constraint. While increasing salaries are often seen by government and other actors as politically sensitive, a cause of inflation, or a recurring cost which donors have no interest in supporting, housing provision and subsidization could be approached in creative and impactful ways that are more feasible to introduce. The government of Ethiopia already has underway in urban areas schemes for the provision of low-cost housing. In Addis Ababa this has taken the form of large-scale building of high-rise condominiums with a range of loan-share programs to increase accessibility for low-income households. A program could be developed to offer priority access on generous terms to teachers, perhaps with priority choice of location where feasible. Access to land, low interest loans and other programs could also be effective.

Housing and land access is very political in Ethiopia but a commitment to supporting teachers in this regard would speak volumes for the governments' valuation of the profession and the respect it should be afforded. This could be rolled out progressively and included in the large-scale studies being undertaken to assess low-cost housing schemes in general so that effectiveness is evaluated on an ongoing basis and necessary modifications are made early on. As long as expansion occurs at a steady pace, even the possibility of having access to housing would do much to uplift the morale of teachers and alleviate perceptions of teaching as a dead-end profession. Consideration might be given to prioritizing housing for women teachers and as an incentive or reward for dedicated commitment to teaching beyond a certain number of years. Addressing widespread insecurity of property tenure for women and allowing for long-term home ownership into retirement should also be given central consideration.

Another issue of importance to personal well-being raised by teachers, women in particular, was the ability to secure adequate childcare. School-based childcare and pre-schools, available at minimal or no cost to teachers with perhaps higher fees for others, could be piloted in consultation with parents. With adequate investment and attention to quality, such programs could, moreover, serve as centers for learning about early childhood development, an area just beginning to receive attention in Ethiopia. Childcare is of primary concern to women teachers for the various reasons described in this dissertation, and so mothers could be given priority access. Providing childcare for all teachers, however, would avoid reinforcement of gender roles and could encourage more involvement of fathers. For young, university graduates concerned about meeting rising living expenses and providing quality care for their children, such measures would make

teaching a more attractive and viable occupation and serve to promote the well-being of young families.

In this way, both housing and childcare provisions would serve to encourage long-term commitment and enhance teachers' personal well-being so that energy and effort may be more effectively directed toward professional engagement. Such material provisions in and of themselves do not guarantee "quality" teaching or constructive engagement of teachers that can fully counter the "here but not here" condition prevalent among teachers in Ethiopian schools. But they do go some ways to providing a basic level of well-being that is demanded in being able to perform professionally and that relates to the basic requirements of justice.

**Enhancing the professional well-being and agency of teachers:** The factors that emerged as constraints to women teachers' professional well-being and agency point to several overlapping areas for constructive intervention at the school and institutional level. Key among these are the need to strengthen educational leadership and its support of women teachers; valuing caring and cultivating it as a collective practice in teaching; fostering collegiality and solidarity among teachers; and improving professional development and mentorship with particular attention to gender equality.

The experiences of teachers highlighted in Chapter 9 indicated the need for school leadership that is present, consistent and supports the efforts of women to pursue valued professional functionings. Transformation of school leadership and its professionalization is an important aspect that receives inadequate attention in a climate of blame the teacher (not that it should be replaced by blame the leadership). For example, if director trainings were less concerned with political indoctrination and more with cultivation of

communities of practice in which common problems in schools were consulted upon and individual directors supported in their efforts to implement promising strategies in their schools, to document their learning and to have this inform policy-making, this could have a profound effect on the institutional environment in which teachers operate and the informational base upon which policy is made. There would be an imperative to engage teachers in consultation, to keep open channels of communication and more effectively build a shared vision and purpose in schools, to which teachers in turn could see themselves contributing.

Such re-orientation and enhancement of school leadership would also offer a much more conducive environment to implement strategic programs to cultivate a new generation of women leaders in education. There is no basis for believing that women will enter leadership positions automatically as more women enter teaching—it has not happened elsewhere. It requires, therefore, purposeful action and systematic learning about what is effective in supporting women and what is not. It also requires those in positions of leadership to be adequately compensated so that garnering of political favor is not the primary benefit. There is, moreover, need for gender-sensitivity training of existing directors, many of whom pay lip service to the importance of having more women teachers and even suggest women are better-suited to the profession, drawing on naturalized assumptions about inherent female qualities, but are unaware of the gender biases that influence their views and actions and that permeate the gender regimes of schools. Neither is there awareness of what directors can do to better support women teachers. While there may be accommodation of more women teachers into the workforce, as there has been elsewhere in the world, such biases and lack of awareness

leads to the common situation where women teach and men lead and manage (Acker, 1994). Simply ushering more women into the profession is not enough.

As was evidenced in this research, teachers in Ethiopia are commonly socialized in schools to take on a police-like posture in relation to students with the aim of upholding authority and reinforcing hierarchies (see also Poluha, 2004). However, the few instances where women teachers participating in this study were supported by head teachers and the administration in their efforts to engage with students differently and to demonstrate an ethic of care and mutual respect, point to possibilities for changing school practice and culture and enhancing the agency of women teachers to be central to that process. As noted in the previous chapter, valuing caring needs to be part of a broader institutional culture of respect for students and concern for human development that is also concerned with justice and autonomy for educational actors. Urban schools in Ethiopia also need more and better trained guidance counsellors, especially female counsellors, to help students deal with the manifold psycho-social problems and traumas they are facing in poor urban contexts and to support teachers. Girls' clubs and other collective spaces similarly allow for collaboration among teachers to respond to requests for help from girls in ways that are more sustainable and empowering than the currently piecemeal efforts of individual women teachers who have to draw on their own limited resources to assist girls. As the number of girls in secondary schools grows (as it has done dramatically in urban Ethiopia), the means for effectively addressing the issues facing them need to be better addressed within a context of respect and a collective ethic of care.

The above measures also point to the need for greater collegiality among teachers and the strengthening of the capability of affiliation (or solidarity) that Walker and Mclean (2010) identify as important to public-good professionalism. This is difficult in the current environment in which many young teachers are “here but not here,” trying to supplement their income or pursue other studies and job prospect, and when domestic obligations, particularly for women, constrain the time and energy available for other activities. The development of collegiality and solidarity is also constrained by a political environment where group gatherings are generally not encouraged. But examples such as that of Samira’s point to how some schools are managing to foster such collegiality, be it through regular staff lunches and outings or creating safe spaces for young teachers to share their challenges and ideas. There is, moreover, a strong history and practice of community associations in Ethiopia that could be better integrated into professional life.

Finally, this study made very evident the lack of meaningful mentorship and professional development accessible to many teachers. Rather than one-off and infrequent trainings, regular opportunities for collective reflection and learning are very much needed in schools. Having identified valued capabilities for the purposes of teacher education and the development of public-good professionals, these need to be revisited through professional development opportunities, and the conditions and arrangements in schools regularly assessed for how they are supporting teachers to act on these capabilities. Women teachers, moreover, need the opportunity to share their experiences in a safe space and mentorship and professional development programs need to be reassessed for their ability in helping teachers understand the operation of gender regimes in their schools, the ways different actors reproduce inequality, and the kinds of practices



that might disrupt these dynamics. Providing advice to women on how to, in effect, be more like men (“speak louder,” “be threatening”, “be serious”) so as to cope with difficult circumstances and protect themselves from students is wholly inadequate. What is needed is regular action-reflection and training within a supportive learning community, and this demands truly owning and recognizing the importance of advancing gender equality and equity.

### **Other Teacher Policy Recommendations**

These recommendations are by no means comprehensive but a few other points related to the findings of this research merit mention. One is the need for greater integration of policies to support the general aim of including women in teaching beyond the primary level. For example, current deployment of women teachers in primary schools by lottery when they are qualified to teach at the secondary level could be remedied by prioritizing secondary school placement of women teachers. Satisfaction with the current system of assignment belies a general bias that women are better suited to the primary school level. To go further, women teachers could be allowed first pick of schools close to their homes and assigned to schools with proven records of supportive leadership and professional development. While more politically challenging to institute, such equity measures (as opposed to those that insist on equal treatment) would help to ensure the inclusion of women into teaching at this time when they are still under-represented, and in a manner that allows for their professional flourishing.

Additionally, while it has been suggested to foster collegiality and strengthen professional development, which requires time-investment on the part of teachers, the findings of this study suggest that teachers’ autonomy over use of their time outside of

the classroom should in general be preserved. Such time autonomy and flexibility was the one enhancing factor in achieving personal well-being that was widely appreciated by teachers, particularly women. While men have greater freedom to use this time as they wish, such autonomy at least aids women in being able to better navigate the demands of professional engagement and domestic work. With broader societal changes, one hopes that the flexibility of the teaching profession in this regard can allow for more equal engagement of women and men in both breadwinning and caregiving.

Lastly, it is important to continue to take a strong line with respect to intolerance of sexual harassment of teachers, as well as students, in schools. In contrast to their undergraduate experience, women in this study reported greater freedom with respect to capabilities of bodily and emotional integrity in school, at least where colleagues and superiors were concerned. The importance of preserving schools as places where women feel physically and emotionally safe cannot be overstated. For this reason, reports of growing harassment by students need to be given attention, and more careful investigation be undertaken as to the reasons behind them and their gendered nature. A blanket effort to enforce punitive measures is unlikely, as already noted, to address the problem or assist students to develop healthy behaviors and relationships.

### **Areas for Further Research**

Already discussed as part of the above recommendations, is the value of developing a multifaceted capabilities index to guide and evaluate educational arrangements and institutional conditions with respect to enhancing women's full inclusion and for the development of public-good professionalism in teaching—across the stages of undergraduate study, teacher education and early teaching. As noted, this

requires systematic examination of the existing research literature on capabilities that may be of relevance and the pedagogical approaches and institutional measures that can support capability enhancement. It also requires broad dialogue and attendant research to elicit the views and learn from the experiences of learners, university faculty, teachers and other actors concerned. This dissertation has simply provided initial insights from women's experiences into key capabilities and existing constraints and demonstrated the need for such an endeavor.

Another aspect that this dissertation opens up for further research is the relationship between enhancement of teacher well-being and agency with their professional engagement and commitment. Building on this research and the work of others (e.g., Robert-Holmes, 2003; Tao, 2013), it would be helpful to deepen understanding and explore further how contending or complying with capability constraint affects the development of a committed teacher identity and constructive, even transformative, engagement with the profession. Buckler's research (2014) also raises the issue of the difference between agency freedom—the opportunities and ability to pursue valued goals—and agency achievement—the actual exercise of agency toward and achievement of those goals. This raises the question of choice—of why teachers, for example, may have the ability to pursue a particular goal but then do not do so—and the influences on that choice. This dissertation focused on the ways in which women teachers do value, for example, helping students learn and often make efforts towards this end but are constrained in their ability to do so effectively and frustrated by this. As such, agency was discussed as a singular concept but parsing this out further and exploring the space between agency and achievement, the cases where teachers choose not to realize certain

professional functionings for which they have the ability is an interesting area for further research. In particular, any gaps between what teachers value and what is officially valued that may result in the widening of this space could shed light on aspects of teacher policies, governance and classroom realities that merit further attention.

While the concern of this dissertation has been with the experiences of young women and the functionings they value, that of older women and those who have been teaching for more than five or ten years also merit study. A focus on later stages may not shed as much light on the path into teaching but could tell us much more about shifting priorities, opportunities, constraints and exercise of agency over time (e.g., as domestic demands on time change, as health concerns increase, as different professional functionings come to be valued). More insights could also be gained from comparative studies of women and men's experiences in teaching and the ways in which gender, as a system of stratification, influences and constrain the lives of both sexes, albeit in different and unequal ways.

Lastly, it is worth returning to the critique by some that there is an over-emphasis on the individual and on freedom in the capability approach. I concur with Robeyns (2005) that the capability approach is rooted in an ethical individualism that is not incompatible with an understanding of the social-embeddedness of individuals. However, because it is focused on the individual and her development it does not readily prompt or lead to consideration of what allows for collective action and agency directed toward change. It becomes important, therefore, to support the capability approach with other theories of social change that would direct attention to the capabilities and arrangements that might allow for effective collective action within constrained environments. For

example, in the context of teaching and the development of public-good professionalism, such an effort might take us beyond a focus on individual resilience and a “thin” notion of collegiality to “thicker” understandings of solidarity and other capabilities important to improving the conditions of teachers’ and women’s lives through collective action. A profession, furthermore, goes beyond the orientations and capabilities of the individuals that comprise it.<sup>190</sup> The political context, which currently in Ethiopia works against collective action, and other institutional aspects such as the workings of teacher associations and professionalization of leadership also need attention. While this dissertation has alluded to some of these aspects, this requires further research and going beyond or supplementing a focus on the individual and group. Similarly, the capabilities approach does not readily prompt examination of the broader political-economic and socio-cultural systems that underpin inequality. While this dissertation has addressed aspects of patriarchy, as well as referenced neoliberal policies that play out in the specific context of the university, there is need for further work to articulate a capabilities approach with theories explaining systemic inequality. Lastly, as Gasper and van Staveren (2003) have pointed out, there is a privileging of freedom in the capability approach above all else. It would be helpful to explore other aspects and sources of well-being and societal development, including the spiritual and moral dimensions of people’s lives, and to consider the capabilities brought to the fore if values such as justice, reciprocity and mutual support, for example, were given more central importance.

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<sup>190</sup> I am indebted to Robert Croninger for emphasizing this point to me.

### *Drawing Conclusions*

This dissertation has shed light on key factors and dynamics that have bearing on the representation and full inclusion of women in secondary school teaching in urban Ethiopia, offering valuable insights for similar contexts in sub-Saharan Africa. It has done so by providing an integrated and emic perspective of the constraints on the well-being and agency of young women in becoming and working as secondary school teachers in Addis Ababa, and their responses to these constraints. It has shown, moreover, that it is in the mix of general and gender-specific constraints that the experiences of entering a low-paying, low-status, “in-between” profession which is also male-dominated are forged for women. In effect, both a devaluation of teaching and of women can be seen to be at work, which is a problem for women and for the advancement of e/quality education even as efforts are made to increase the numbers of women entering teaching.

The most overtly discriminatory and hostile environment for women of the three stages examined was found to be the stage of undergraduate university studies. In this context, women experienced disadvantage as a result of gendered constraints on their ability to convert the resources available to them into necessary and valued capabilities. Entry into university deepened capability deprivation in the many cases where the threat and incidence of sexual harassment was dominant, gender biases prevailed and there was lack of recognition of the differing needs of women with respect to infrastructure and safety. Undergraduate university study also failed to adequately address prior capability deprivation—even while recognizing it through affirmative action policies—with inadequate educational arrangements in place to support student learning and

engagement. Given that most of the participants in this study were from poor and rural backgrounds, it can be surmised that the ability to develop key capabilities needed for equal participation in university, and that should be developed through university study, is particularly constrained for many of these women. At the same time it was found that while women demonstrated resilience and drew on the capability of social relations and networks to survive, some of the ways in which agency was exercised in response to constraint, to preserve fundamental capabilities such as bodily and emotional integrity, resulted in the compromising of learning and undermining of other important capabilities such as voice, autonomy and language confidence, and the emergence of adaptive preferences, such as avoiding leadership positions. Rather than being the “fault” of women or the result of inherent deficiency, these manifestations reflect severe social and institutional constraints on women’s capabilities that negatively impact their well-being and agency.

This research, thus, confirms what other studies (Molla & Cuthbert, 2014; Mulugeta, 2010) have found with respect to the disadvantages women face in HEIs in Ethiopia and the kinds of “qualitative inequalities,” to use Molla and Cuthbert’s framing, which should be addressed. It also brought to light critical capabilities that are currently being undermined and that should be developed through HE. An important contribution of the capability approach, which this study demonstrates, is not only that the educational development of each student matters, requiring that we go beyond the narrow focus on HE expansion and access, but that we also need to pay attention to interpersonal comparison in the space of capabilities in order to address equity and equality. This supports Walker’s argument that “who gets to develop valuable capabilities, and who is

constrained in such development are matters of both the distribution of resources and of capability for equality and agency achievement in higher education” (2006a, p. 142).

In this regard, it can be seen that the broader political economy of HE reform, shaped as it is at this time by neoliberalism, is itself a primary constraining factor of particular detriment to already marginalized students. While expansion of the system has benefitted women and others in terms of widened access, key neoliberal policy elements such as reduction of public spending, emphasis on greater efficiency and alignment of HE with economic productivity all seriously impact the role of the government and public HEIs in addressing substantive inequality and inequity in the system (Molla, 2013 p. 209). In collusion with such neoliberal influences is the acceptance of male privilege as “normal” that prevails in a largely patriarchal society such as Ethiopia. Those in power and participating in policy-making, mostly men, are not boldly challenging the silences or pushing for substantive change. It becomes all too easy for issues of equity to be sidelined in the face of “bigger problems” confronting African education systems. Unless greater political will and action, including the provision of resources, supports the prioritization of equity, many of the factors discussed here are unlikely to be addressed and women will continue to be disadvantaged and excluded.

With respect to the issue of the under-representation of women teachers, the disadvantages women experience in university contributes to high attrition rates at the undergraduate level, resulting in fewer qualified women available to go into teaching. At the same time, women who do succeed in graduating have high expectations that a university degree will allow them to achieve what they have reason to value as a good life. They come, moreover, to think of themselves as chemists, biologists, linguists and



graduates of fields other than teaching. The inclination, then, to enter and commit to a profession widely understood as being of low-pay and status is greatly curtailed. This is, in part, why quotas for female teachers are not filled and women are under-represented in secondary teaching.

There are, nonetheless, female graduates who do enroll in teacher education, some of whom (albeit a small minority) who have long been inclined to teaching and others who have less formed interest but few alternative employment options. Selection guidelines and quotas for women again aid the entry of these university graduates into teacher education but, as the findings of this dissertation show, the PGDT program currently limits the development of officially-valued capabilities for teaching and a strong teacher identity and inadequately supports women's inclusion into the profession. Among the factors identified as constraints during teacher training were those general to all students in the program, although worsened by gender biases. The prevailing "single-story" told by faculty about pre-service teachers as poor performing, opportunistic and even lazy, bred a lack of faith in PGDT students and a sense of futility in working with them. Loss of a sense of ownership of the program by faculty and even the College was also evident, in part abdicated through fatigue over perpetual reform and in response to top-down directives from the MoE. This confirms Tessema's reading of education faculty as lacking "emotional and deliberative engagement" and their presence in processes of reform as characterized by "peripheralization" (2007, p.41). In addition, the content of the PGDT courses was found to be far removed from the very challenging conditions teachers face in poor, urban schools. The practicum exposed student-teachers to some of these challenges, including the discouraging counsel of in-service teachers telling them to

leave while they can, without opportunity for reflection, learning and mentorship that might empower them. In short, reference to officially-valued capabilities identified in PGDT guidelines remained at the level of policy without educational arrangements and institutional conditions that could adequately develop them and direct teacher agency toward their achievement.

With respect to gendered constraints facing women in the PGDT program and their responses to them, outright discriminatory practices were found to be slight compared to undergraduate experiences, and AAU was generally felt by female student-teachers interviewed to be much safer. Nonetheless, the more general biases against student-teachers evident in the single story were compounded by gender biases shaping low expectations of female teachers—sometimes expressed in the form of surprise when women demonstrated ability and other times by ignoring their presence and dismissing their possible contributions as teachers—which did not address and at times deepened prior under-development of capabilities such as language confidence, voice, emotional integrity, respect and recognition. Most of the women, having survived undergraduate studies, had developed a certain resilience and were focused on simply completing the different requirements to graduate from the PGDT program. For those with already weak interest in teaching or whose interest had been weakened by their experience in the program, agency began to be directed towards plans for exit. Several were already enrolled or intended to enroll in other fields of study, a few had part-time jobs that might lead to alternative work or were seeking opportunities for other full-time employment. A minority, despite discouragement and limited support, were unshaken in their intent to be teachers.

It can be concluded from this that the experience of the PGDT program did not as much introduce new constraints for women as aggravate existing deprivation and weaken the attachment of many to teaching. The importance of supporting women's full inclusion in teaching was not a priority institutionally or for many of the faculty. As articulated by the coordinator of the PGDT program, gender equity was presumed to have been addressed by the MoE in facilitating women's entry in the first place. A focus on empowerment, on raising gender-awareness and of developing capabilities that enable teachers to facilitate such learning in their own classrooms was largely missing. The stage of teacher education, in this way, currently represents a lost opportunity: a lost opportunity to work with pre-service teachers, even if limited to a short time, to enhance their capabilities and agency to teach well and effect positive change. It also amounts to an erasure of what women pre-service teachers (almost all first-generation university graduates from rural and low-income backgrounds; many of them the only female graduates in their family) have managed to accomplish in getting to this point and a dismissal of their potential as teachers.

After describing the undergraduate and teacher training experiences of the women participating in the study, this dissertation went on to examine their experiences in government secondary schools during their early years of teaching, addressing both their personal well-being and professional well-being and agency. Inadequate income to meet the rising costs of urban living and to pursue basic functionings was the primary constraint to personal well-being raised by teachers and the main reason that the majority intended to leave the profession. When asked what they wanted higher income for, women teachers identified "living in a satisfactory home" and "providing for oneself and

family” as the most important functionings. These basic functionings were necessary not only for survival but also instrumental to the achievement of other functionings, such as being independent and being respected, which were greatly valued by women and relate to important capabilities of emotional and bodily integrity, recognition and autonomy. The daily survival of most of the teachers in this study, however, was only made possible through material dependence on their (already struggling) families, who, in effect, were subsidizing their contribution to the public education system. That several participants had sisters who were domestic workers abroad or who married early but were now better-off and contributing materially to the family, while they as teachers with their university degrees could not, was not lost on these women or their families.

This study, moreover, highlighted the role of gender in shaping women’s aspirations and ability to convert limited resources into valued functionings. For example, providing for one’s family was for women tied to independence and autonomy and was commonly understood to involve being able to earn enough money to pay for someone else’s labor in the home in order to replace one’s own in an unequal sexual division of household responsibilities. Being able to pay for educational materials and better schooling for one’s children was part of claiming one’s status as a material provider, as well as physical-emotional caregiver, and thus particularly tied to recognition and respect and valued by women. Gender featured as a conversion factor with respect to being able to secure “adequate” housing, the requirements for safety and sanitation differing for women and men and resulting in higher housing costs for young women who might wish or need to live outside a family home. The insights revealed through this research, thus, disrupt the norm of the single male and “his” conception of the good life, bringing to

light what women value, how they are constrained and what should be considered in policy interventions. As the recommendations discussed earlier in this chapter detailed, securing adequate housing and childcare are key issues for all teachers and women in particular and could, if addressed, enhance their personal well-being, longer-term participation and greater engagement in the profession.

Faced with living a life of material deprivation and disadvantage, teachers in urban Ethiopia have good cause to direct agency toward leaving the profession. Indeed, in this study the vast majority of participants, men and women, hoped to find other work within three or four years. However, this often does not prove possible. For women, moreover, traditional gender roles and the unequal division of labor in the home, threats to safety, limited social networks and prior under-development of s-capabilities are among the factors that can contribute to greater occupational *immobility*. A situation, thus, exists in which women's representation and retention in the teaching workforce does not necessarily reflect their well-being, gender equality or empowerment. Rather, it is often the case that young women with the most enhanced capabilities—autonomy, voice, knowledge and skills, language competency and confidence, social networks—and material resources who are the ones who are able to find better employment, pursue studies in another field or start their own business and leave teaching.

In this context, it is not only the capability to achieve personal functionings that influences teachers' goals with respect to staying and participating in teaching. Professional well-being and agency, and in particular the experiences of teachers during their first years of teaching, were shown to influence what they make of their time while in-service and their response to occupational immobility. In this regard, this study

revealed that the capabilities and functionings valued by the MoE and other stakeholders informing teacher policy are removed from the realities of classrooms and ignore the more immediate challenges public school teachers face in urban Ethiopia. In-service teachers were found in this context to be not so much opposed to officially-valued functionings as they were unable to effectively pursue and achieve them. The wide gap between the need to help students learn, which teachers recognized and valued, and their efficacy in doing so produced a sense of disenchantment and powerlessness. The constrained ability to achieve valued professional functionings further discouraged those who entered the occupation as an interim measure from committing themselves to teaching or seeing what they do as making any difference. This is not dissimilar to dynamics in other contexts, even poor urban schools in the cities of high-income countries (e.g., Braun, 2011). It takes on exaggerated form in Ethiopian urban schools, however, where teaching is of such low pay and status, where dramatic recent expansion of enrollments has greatly eroded education quality, and where the urban social problems students face are on a scale that is new to the country.

Such professional capability impoverishment has widespread implications, but with respect to advancing gender equality in teaching and schools it results in a lack of transformed and purposeful agents. Entering the PGDT program, female student-teachers interviewed did not express a developed awareness of the role they could play to support girls' learning and promote equity (neither did the men, who of their own accord are even less likely to see themselves in this role), and the program did little to develop such an orientation or skills for gender-responsive teaching. Once in schools, women teachers reported being approached by female students for various kinds of support but

experienced this as a challenge to be addressed on their own. Their ability to help students learn in general was further eroded by the difficulties of operating within a male-dominated environment where the competency and authority of women teachers was often not recognized and undermined in various ways. Nonetheless, some of the experiences highlighted in this dissertation point to school-level factors that can, and in a few instance did, support women teachers' fuller participation in teaching, and to the ready potential of many women to contribute toward transformation of educational practice. Examination of factors contributing to the shift from "reluctant acquiescence" to "constructive engagement" for a few teachers was particularly illuminating in this regard.

The overall conclusion that can, thus, be drawn from this study is that if we want women to enter the teaching profession, to stay in it and to fully engage and contribute to its improvement, then we need to be concerned with more than just their access and entry into teaching: that is, with more than the setting of affirmative action policies and quotas at the entry stage of undergraduate studies and teacher education (as important as these are). We need also to be concerned with what becoming and working as a teacher currently means for women in terms of their personal and professional well-being and agency. The findings presented in this dissertation lead us to conclude that women's increased entry into teaching needs to be advanced at the same time as working toward the betterment of the profession and the educational arrangements that support capability development. Otherwise, women will, like their male counterparts, direct energy and attention toward pursuing a better life by exiting the profession, and while working as teachers will face similar challenges to men but further compounded by gendered constraints that particularly disadvantage them and limit the valuable contributions they


can and want to make. To advance quality and equity in education, we need women teachers who have undergone a transformative process of education themselves and who have the possibility of living and working with enhanced well-being and agency as teachers. This dissertation has shed light on the ways in which existing educational arrangements and institutional conditions fall short of this in the Ethiopian context; it has identified as well some of the key capabilities that need to be enhanced and the possibilities for women's greater inclusion and transformative participation in secondary school teaching.



## Appendices

### Appendix A: Official Letter of Introduction to Schools

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND BEHAVIORAL STUDIES  
Director Office  
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

Date: May 20, 2014  
Ref. No. / CEBS/288 /2014

To: Dej. Belay Zeleke No. 1 School  
Bethlehem School  
Kokebe Tsibah Secondary School  
Addis Tesfa School  
Meskerem School  
Entoto Amba School  
Yetebaberut Memhiran School  
Bole Community School  
Beshale School  
Misrak Dil School

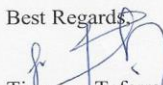
Dear Principal,

This letter serves to introduce to you Mrs. Negar Ashtari Abay, who is a US Fulbright student from the University of Maryland currently affiliated with the College of Education and Behavioral Studies, Addis Ababa University. She is conducting her PhD dissertation research on the **experience of women secondary school teachers** during their training and early years of teaching.


Mrs. Ashtari Abay is currently visiting several secondary schools in Addis Ababa to conduct interviews with female teachers about their university and teaching experiences. We would greatly appreciate your assistance in allowing her to talk individually with a few of the teachers in your school and to observe some of their activities. The research being conducted is not focused on any school and does not involve any kind of assessment. It is concerned with understanding the common experiences of women in the teaching profession in Addis Ababa so as to support their recruitment and retention at the secondary school level.

We thank you for your time and willingness to facilitate the conducting of this research. Should you have any questions, feel free to contact Mrs. Ashtari Abay directly (cell: 0939803211). She is also happy to share with you additional information about the research.

Best Regards,



Tirussew Teferra (Laureate Professor),  
Dean, College of Education and Behavioral Studies  
Addis Ababa University



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Behavioral Studies  
Addis Ababa University

☎: 011 (1) 23 97 80    ☒ : 1176    Fax: 011 (1) 24-27-19    E-mail. coed@edu.aau.edu.et

## Appendix B: Interview Protocols

### **Interview Protocol 1: Undergraduate Student Experiences**

*[Protocol for AAU undergraduate and PGDT students regarding their undergraduate experiences at different universities around the country]*

#### **FAMILY BACKGROUND**

1. Can you tell me about where you grew up and your family?
2. Are there other members of your family who have gone to university?

#### **SCHOOLING**

3. Tell me about primary and secondary school. What was it like for you in school?  
Did you like school?  
What were the biggest challenges you faced?
4. Do you think your experience in school as a girl was different from those of boys?  
Was your experience different from other girls in your class?

#### **PATH TO UNIVERISTY/FIELD OF STUDY**

5. How is it that you came to attend AAU?
6. How did you come to study (.....)?  
Do you think this is a difficult field of study for women to pursue?
7. Would you be interested in becoming a teacher? (Why/Why not?)
8. Do you think teaching is a good profession for women?

#### **UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE (General)**

9. What has your experience of university been like so far?  
What do you like about university?  
Have you experienced any challenges?
10. So you mentioned (.....) being a challenge. Can you tell me more about this?  
What do people do when they face this?  
What have you done? (or do you think you will do?)  
Has it helped?
11. In general on this campus, do you think life is the same or different for women and men? In what ways is it different?

#### **ACADEMIC AND CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS**

12. How have you been finding your studies? Have you faced any difficulties?  
Are there other women in your classes? (How many?)  
How would you describe the relationship between women and men in your classes?  
Do you think there are some general views that male students have about female students? Do you think this influences the way you choose to act?

#### FACULTY INTERACTION

13. How has your experience been with the faculty here as a woman student? (You don't need to mention any names)  
Do you have an advisor? How is your relationship with your advisor?  
Do you have any female lecturers? Have you found them to be different from male lecturers in any ways?

#### FINANCIAL

14. Do you generally have enough money for what you need? Do you worry about money?  
How are you supported financially while you are in university?  
Do you think women students face more financial difficulties than men?  
If you had more money right now, what would you spend it on?

#### ACCOMMODATION – CAMPUS – PERSONAL SAFETY

15. Where are you living and how has this been for you?
16. Do you like being on the campus? Why?/Why not?  
Do you feel safe on the campus?  
Are there places that you do not feel comfortable going as a woman?

#### CLUBS/SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

17. Are there groups or student organizations on campus that women tend to join more than men? What groups are you a member of?  
Are there any groups trying to improve things for women on campus? What do you think of them?

#### RELATIONSHIPS

18. Have you found romantic relationship at university to be different from what you expected? Do these pose problems for women while at university?  
If you were to give advice to your younger sister or another incoming female student about dating and relationships with men while at university, what would it be?

#### DIFFERENCES AMONG WOMEN

19. Do you think that some women's experiences of university are different from yours? In what ways?

#### DROPPING OUT

20. Have you ever thought about leaving university before completing your studies?  
Why? What made you stay?  
Do you know anyone who has left? Why did they leave? What are they doing now?

#### GENDER OFFICE/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION/ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING

21. Have you ever talked to anyone in the gender office or taken part in any program they offer?
22. Do you know if there are any policies in the university that specifically try to help women? (give examples if needed)  
Do you think these policies are helpful?
23. Did you take part in any training for women on campus (e.g., assertiveness training)?  
Can you tell me about it? Have you found it to be useful to you?

#### FUTURE PLANS

24. What are your plans for after you graduate?
25. Can you describe what you hope to be doing 10 years from now?  
(Working? Living where? Married? Children?)  
Do you think there are challenges you will face as a women in achieving this?  
It is possible to overcome these, yes? How will you do it?

#### *DESCRIBE MORE ABOUT MY RESEARCH and then ask:*

26. What do you think it would be good for me to know that I have not asked?

#### *TELL THEM MORE ABOUT MYSELF, INTERESTS. ANSWER THEIR QUESTIONS.*

If I have more questions for you, can I communicate with you by phone or email and perhaps arrange another time for us to meet?

*[Get contact info]*

## **Interview Protocol 2: PGDT Students**

PART 1 (ignore questions asked previously of this participant):

### **FAMILY BACKGROUND**

1. Can you tell me about where you grew up and your family?
2. Are there other members of your family who have gone to university?

### **SCHOOLING**

3. Tell me about primary and secondary school. What was it like for you in school?  
Did you like school?  
What were the biggest challenges you faced?

### **PATH TO ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY (AAU)**

4. Where were you before coming to AAU? What were you doing?
5. How did you come to study (.....) for your undergraduate degree?

### **PATH TO TEACHING/VIEWS OF TEACHING**

6. Why did you decide to train as a secondary school teacher?
7. How is teaching viewed in Ethiopia by most people?
8. Do you think, in general, it is difficult to become a teacher? What has been your experience?
9. Do you think teaching is a good profession for women?  
Why do you think there are so few women secondary school teachers?
10. Do you think it is important to have more women teachers? (why/why not?)

### **PLANS POST-GRADUATION**

11. What are your plans for after you graduate?  
For how long do you intend to teach?  
Do you want to get married? To have children? [IF MARRIED/WITH CHILDREN ASK ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS about living situation, what spouse does etc.]  
Do you think it is possible to be a teacher and have a family?
12. What do you want to be doing 5 years from now?  
How do you plan to do this?  
Do you think you will face challenges as a woman in achieving this?

PART 2 (PGDT program)

### EXPERIENCE IN TEACHER ED PROGRAM (General)

Perhaps we can talk a little more now about your experience in the teacher education program here at AU:

1. Has the program been different from what you expected?  
What do you like about the program?  
What challenges have you faced?
2. Can you tell me more about these challenges?  
Do you think (.....) is a bigger problem for women?  
What do people do when they experience this? What have you done?

### VIEWS ABOUT WOMEN IN PROGRAM/UNIVERSITY (General)

3. In the teacher education program here at AAU, do you think your experience as a woman is generally the same as men in your cohort?  
Do you think women students are generally successful?
4. What about more generally in the university – do you think the experience of women is different from men's? In what ways?

### FINANCES

5. What kind of financial support do teacher education students receive? How do you support yourself?  
Is this money sufficient for you?

### ACADEMICS AND CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS

6. Tell me about your classes here. How have you found them to be?  
How would you describe the relationship between women and men in your classes and among you cohort?  
Do you think there are some general views that male students have about female students?  
Do you think this influences the way you choose to act?

### INTERACTIONS WITH FACULTY

7. What has been your experience with the faculty in this department?  
Do you have an advisor? How is your relationship with your advisor?  
Do you have any female lecturers?  
Have you found them to be different from male lecturers in any ways?

### PRE-SERVICE TEACHING EXPERIENCE

8. Can you tell me about your practical teaching experience so far?  
What have you found challenging?  
Do you think you are treated differently as a woman – by students, by school staff, by your supervisor?

### INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER UNIVERSITY STAFF

9. Are there other staff and offices you interact with as a teacher education student?  
Do you think you are treated differently in any ways as a woman student?

#### GENDER OFFICE/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION/ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING

10. Have you ever talked to anyone in the gender office or taken part in any program they offer?
11. Do you know if there are any policies in the university that specifically try to help women?  
Do you think these policies are helpful?
12. Did you take part in any training for women on campus (e.g., assertiveness training)?  
Can you tell me about it?  
Have you found it to be useful to you?

#### DROPPING OUT

13. Have you ever thought about leaving your program before your studies are finished? Why? What made you stay?  
Do you know anyone who has left the program? Do you know why? What are they doing now?

#### DESCRIBE MORE FULLY MY RESEARCH then ask:

14. What do you think it would be good for me to know that I have not asked?

Would you be willing to talk with me again if I have more questions or want to ask you more about something you said?

Would you be willing to discuss some of the things we talked about in a group with other women students in your cohort?

*[Get contact info]*

### **Interview Protocol 3: In-Service Teachers**

*[Some of the questions in Part 2 below also asked of School Directors with respect to the general experience of teachers in their school, in addition to other basic questions about their duties as director and follow-up questions on specific issues raised in teacher interviews]*

#### **PART 1**

##### **FAMILY BACKGROUND**

1. Can you tell me about where you grew up and your family?
2. Are there other members of your family who have gone to university?

##### **SCHOOLING**

3. Tell me about your own experience in primary and secondary school. What was it like for you in school?  
Do you think your school experiences influence you now as a teacher in any way?
4. Do you think your experience in school as a girl was different from those of boys?  
Was your experience different from other girls in your class?

##### **FAMILY STATUS**

5. Are you married?  
Is your husband living with you here?
6. Do you have children? Where do they live?

##### **PATH TO TEACHING**

7. How did you decide to become a teacher?
8. How did you come to teach (subject)?
9. What does your family think about you being a teacher?  
Are any members of your family teachers? Did they say anything to you about becoming a teacher?  
Do you have any female classmates from secondary school that have become teachers?

##### **TEACHER TRAINING**

10. Can you tell me about experience in university and training to become a teacher?  
Where were did you study?  
Did you face any particular challenges as a woman student?
11. From you cohort, did everyone go on to teach? (Who did not/why?)  
Do you keep in touch with any of the women? Do you talk about your experiences?



What have they said – do they like teaching?

#### TRANSITION TO TEACHING

12. So how did you come to be posted here as a teacher?  
Did you intend to begin teaching right away?  
Is this where you hoped to teach? (why/why not?)

#### TEACHING BASICS

13. Can you describe to me your work at this school?  
Can you talk be through a typical day?
14. What do you do when school is not in session?
15. Have you found your university training to be useful to you?  
Are there things you wish they told you that was not covered?
16. Have you participated in trainings during your time here?  
Is there training that you know is offered that you would like to participate in?

#### FUTURE PLANS

17. What are your plans for the next two years?
18. What do you hope to be doing 5 years from now?  
What do you hope to be doing 10 years from now?  
Do you think you will face particular obstacles as a woman in achieving this?  
  
[If not addressed: Do you think you will get married? Do you want to have children?  
Do you think you will teach/work when you have children?]
19. Can you describe to me the process of promotion as a teacher?  
Is this something you will be actively pursuing? (Why/why not?)  
Do you think it is harder for women to get promoted?  
Do you think you would pursue becoming a principal?
20. Do you think secondary school teaching is a good occupation for women?  
Is your opinion now different from what is was before?

#### PART 2

##### FIRST YEAR OF TEACHING (general experience)

1. What was your experience like during the first year of teaching?  
What was been unexpected?  
What was most challenging?  
What did you do in response to this? Has it been helpful? What do others do?

2. Do you think women face more challenges as teachers than men?

*[Move to specific questions below as an issue is raised by the participant]*

#### CLASSROOM AND STUDENT INTERACTION

3. What has it been like for you in the classroom as a teacher?  
Have you faced any particular challenges as a woman?

#### RELATIONS/INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER TEACHERS

4. Can you tell me about your relationship here with the other teachers?  
Are there some teachers who have been particularly helpful to you during this first year?  
Are there teachers with whom you have had some problems or with whom you do not get along (you do not need to mention any names)? What kinds of problems?
5. What do you think is the general attitude of teachers here toward their job? Do they like teaching?  
Are there complaints that women teachers in particular have?
6. Do you think you are viewed differently or treated differently as a woman by your colleagues?  
Are there different expectations of how women and men should behave?  
How does this affect the way you act or feel?

#### RELATIONSHIP WITH ADMINISTRATION & SUPERVISION

7. Which staff aside from teachers do you interact with regularly? Have you experienced any problems in your interactions with them?
8. What is the process of supervision for newly-qualified teachers at this school?  
Do you generally feel comfortable talking to your supervisor?  
How often do you meet? How has he/she been helpful to you?
9. Are there problems you have experienced during this first year that you have not raised with your supervisor?  
Do you think it would make a difference if your supervisor was a woman?

#### INTERACTIONS WITH PARENTS AND COMMUNITY

10. Do you think teachers in this town are generally respected?
11. Do you think there are any differences in how women and men teachers are viewed by people outside the school?  
What about by the students?  
What about their parents?  
Does this affect you in any way?

#### WORK LOAD and ROLES

12. Are there duties at school that women tend to perform that the men do not or vice versa? Does this bother you?
13. Do you find your workload to be manageable?  
Is your workload different from other teachers? How?
14. What are aspects of your work as a teacher that make your job difficult?  
Do any of these affect you more as a woman teacher?

#### INCOME AND BENEFITS (Finances)

15. Do you have other sources of income or financial support?  
Are there any possibilities to do additional paid work as a teacher? Have you tried anything?
16. What other benefits come with this teaching position?
17. Do you think the financial situation of women teachers is different from men?

#### ACCOMODATION & TRANSPORTATION

18. Are there any problems that women teachers face with regard to accommodation?  
Where do you live? Have you had any problems?
19. Are there any problems women teachers face with regard to transportation?  
How do you get to school?  
Is it ever a problem for you coming and going as a woman? Do you ever travel alone?

#### PERSONAL SAFETY

20. Do you ever feel unsafe as a woman on school grounds? Outside the school?
21. I do not need to know the specifics, but have you felt harassed as a woman during your time teaching here?  
Do you know of any other teachers here who have experienced harassment? What kind of thing did this involve? What can you do when this happens?

#### SOCIAL LIFE

22. What is your social life like here as a woman?  
Do you feel restricted in any way?

#### MINISTRY AND TEACHER UNIONS

23. Do you have any interactions with the ministry as a teacher here? Have you faced any challenges?
24. Are you a member of a teacher union? Do both women and men join?

25. Have you heard any discussion relating to women teachers in Ethiopia in the media, the teacher union or any other forum?

#### GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF SITUATION OF WOMEN TEACHERS

26. In general, thinking about the different aspects we have discussed and your experience, would you say your experience has been different to that of male teachers?

27. Do you think your experience has been different from other women teachers here in any ways?

28. What do you think can be done to improve the situation of women teachers?

Would you be willing to talk with me again if I have more questions or want to ask you more about something you said?

Would you be willing to discuss some of the things we talked about in a group with other women students in your cohort?

*[Get contact info]*

## **Interview Protocol 4: AAU Education Faculty**

### **BACKGROUND/PATH TO AAU**

1. Can you tell me a bit about your background: What you studied? How you came to join the faculty at AAU?  
How long have you been a faculty member here?

### **ROLE IN COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**

2. What does your work here in the College involve?  
Do you serve as an advisor? How many students do you advise? (No. of females?)

### **VIEWS ON TEACHING (general), TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS & WOMEN IN TEACHING**

3. In general, how is secondary school teaching as an occupation perceived in Ethiopia?  
Has this view changed over time?
4. What aspects of the profession have changed in the last two decades?
5. In your opinion, what draws most students into the teacher education program?  
Have you noted changes in the type of students seeking to become teachers in recent years?
6. Are there students who fail to complete the program? Which students are most likely not to finish?
7. Are there students who complete this program but do not go into teaching?  
(Why?)
8. As you probably know, women are represented in large numbers in teaching in other parts of the world. What do you think are the reasons for so few women in teaching, especially at the secondary level, in Ethiopia?
9. Do you think increasing the number of women teachers is an important issue at this time? (Why?)  
Is this a matter that you hear being discussed in the College or outside?

### **GENDER DYNAMICS IN CLASSES AND PROGRAM**

10. Do you think that women students face particular challenges in this program?  
(Why?)
11. What are interactions between male and female students like in your classes and in the program in general?  
In your classes, how many women students would you say you have on average?  
What is their participation in class like?

Have you noted differences among women students?

12. Do you notice any difference between your male and female advisees? Have you had any problems?

Have female students come to you with any specific problems?

13. Does the subject of gender feature in any part of the teacher education curriculum and training? How specifically?

#### FACULTY GENDER DYNAMICS

14. Why is it that there are very few women faculty in the College of Education?

15. Do you think female faculty are perceived differently from their male colleagues in anyways? (by other faculty, by students, by the university administration?)

#### AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND GENDER-SPECIFIC POLICIES

16. I understand there are affirmative action policies to increase the number of women entrants in the university. How do they work in this College? What is your view of these policies?

17. What is the role of the gender office on campus? Do you have any interaction with that office?

18. Has the department taken any measures now or in the past to assist women students in this program? Can you tell me about them?

#### WOMEN IN TEACHING (beyond training)

19. What about after training, do you think women face particular constraints as teachers in secondary schools? (explore leadership as well)

20. In your view, what are the main obstacles to increasing women's representation in secondary teaching and gender equality in the teaching profession?

#### SAY MORE ABOUT MY RESEARCH:

21. What do you think it will be important for me to investigate?

*[Follow-up questions also asked regarding specific issues raised by pre- and in- service teacher participants.]*

## Interview Protocol 5: MoE Personnel

1. May I ask you a bit about your own background? How did you come to work in the MoE? What is your educational and work background? What does your position here involve?
2. What do you view to be the most pressing challenges with respect to secondary school education in Ethiopia at this time?
3. What are the challenges to increasing the number of qualified secondary school teachers?
4. Why do you think there are so few women teachers, particularly at the secondary school level, in Ethiopia?
5. Is there a push, do you think, to have more qualified female teachers? (If not, why not?) Can you give me examples of how this issue is being discussed?
6. In your view, why is it important or not so important at this time to push for more qualified women teachers?  
Is this a generally held view?
7. To your knowledge are there any policies that pertain to women teachers? (E.g., increasing number, addressing certain inequalities). What are these?
8. Would you say the experience of women teachers is different to that of men in Ethiopia? In what ways? (Do they face particular challenges?) Is this reflected in existing policy?
9. So say the goal is to have a greater number of women in the teaching workforce and to ensure that there is equality between women and men in the profession. What are the main obstacles to this?
10. What measures do you think would serve to support this goal?  
What are the main obstacles to pursuing and implementing such measures?
11. Is women's participation in teaching an issue that is given attention by any of the actors you mentioned at the beginning? In what ways/Why not?

*[Follow-up questions also asked regarding specific issues raised in interviews with other research participants]*

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