

Teaching Legal Research Methods in the LL.B. Programme of Ethiopian Law Schools: The Need to Revisit Some Key Points

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Introduction

Modern legal education in Ethiopia dates back to 1963, the year in which the then Haile Selassie I University (now Addis Ababa University) opened its Faculty of Law. The Faculty of Law at Addis Ababa University had been the only institution that offered an undergraduate law (LL.B.) degree programme until the late 1990s. The Ethiopian Civil Service College (now the Ethiopian Civil Service University) offered the same programme starting from the mid-1990s. In the early 2000s, new law schools were opened at the so-called "First Generation Universities": Mekele University, Bahir Dar University, Haramaya University, Hawassa University, University of Gondar, and Jimma University. The trend of opening new law schools was later followed by other public universities that were established after the First Generation Universities.¹ Private law schools were also opened in different parts of Ethiopia.² The expansion of law schools was later followed by the adoption of the Reform Document on legal education and training in 2006.³

The Reform Document singled out various problems in the existing LL.B. curricula. Poor research methodology training in the LL.B. programmes was one of the problems identified by the Reform Document. Later, a national LL.B. curriculum was adopted based on the guidelines provided in the Reform Document. The inclusion of a course on legal research methods was

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¹ Currently, the LL.B. programme is offered by twenty-six federal public universities, and one regional public university (Oromiya State University).

² It should be noted that private law schools are banned from offering LL.B., diploma and other law programmes.

³ *FDRE, Legal Education and Training Reform Document*, Addis Ababa, 2006 (unpublished).

one way in which the newly adopted national LL.B. curriculum departed from existing LL.B. curricula.

However, as the culture of teaching legal research methods in Ethiopian law schools is relatively new (it is not older than a decade), the process faces a number of problems. Having taught a legal research methods course for more than eight years, this writer has identified and experienced the following problems and challenges facing both students and course instructors: overly large class sizes, students who lack substantive law foundation (i.e., no exposure to core doctrinal concepts and issues), inadequate credit allotment for the course, and a lack of qualified and experienced course instructors.

In this reflection the challenges and problems facing Ethiopian law schools, in particular, and the challenges facing the teaching of legal research methods courses will be discussed. Specifically, the reflection will examine how large class size, heavy teaching load, timing of the course delivery; and the teaching, research, and publication experiences of instructors affect the quality of teaching legal research methods in the LL.B. programme of Ethiopian law schools.⁴ The reflection will be concluded by recommending possible ways to address these problems.

To collect empirical data a questionnaire was developed and administered. In the reflection eleven public law schools were surveyed.⁵ A focus group discussion among first year law students at Bahir Dar University was also conducted. The writer has selected the eleven public law schools and the members of the focus group discussion by using convenient sampling techniques.⁶

⁴ It should be noted that these are not the only factors that are affecting the quality of the teaching of legal research methods. It is also possible to think of other factors like the content and the quality of the teaching material, the facility of the law schools, and role of stakeholders such as courts, prosecution departments, attorney offices and others. However, in the opinion of this writer, compared to these factors the aforementioned factors are key points that need more focus and further discussion.

⁵ In the reflection law schools at Addis Ababa University, Arba Minch University, Assosa University, Bahir Dar University, Debre Markos University, Dilla University, Jimma University, Mizan-Tepi University, Semera University, University of Gondar, and Wollega University were surveyed.

⁶ To collect empirical data it was convenient for the writer to use LL.M. students studying at Bahir Dar University, Jimma University, and Arba Minch University, and a friend teaching at Addis Ababa University. Law schools were non-randomly selected by taking in to account the convenience of the data collection process. Fortunately, law schools from the three-generation universities were

1. Large Class Size and Heavy Teaching Load

Large class size affects the teaching-learning process of legal research methods in two ways. It diminishes the active engagement of students, and it puts a heavy teaching load on the instructor. In the following sub-sections, these two points will be analyzed and expanded.

1.1. Students' Active Engagement

Learning legal research as a skill-oriented course needs the close supervision of the instructor. "The legal research classroom should be an active one that offers hands-on learning experiences for the students."⁷ As a skill-oriented course, the active engagement of students is crucial in legal research methods classes. "Sole reliance on a passive teaching format (text-lecture-exam) for a research methods course runs the risk of driving student motivation and interest even lower than typically expected."⁸ A number of studies have been conducted on the impact of class size on the active engagement of students. For instance, J. Barraket pointed out that the combination of a student-centered approach and a small class size is an effective way of research methodology teaching methods.⁹ However, it should be noted that class size is not the only factor that affects active learning. There are a number of factors that affect the active engagement of students.¹⁰ Among these factors the most important ones are:

[A]ttendance at and active participation in class, hours of personal study, be it alone or in a group, engagement with the discipline or disciplines the student is studying (the extent to which the student of history or physics, say, feels, and acts as a historian or physicist in the making) or attachment with that disciplinary community, collaborative and more informal interaction with fellow students, or 'peer engagement', interaction with

represented in the sample taken. It was also convenient to use first-year LL.B. students at Bahir Dar University as participants in the focus group discussion.

⁷ Filippa M. Anzalone, Some Musings on Teaching Legal Research, *the Journal of the Legal Writing Institute* 20, (2015), p.7.

⁸ Jill A. Gordon, Christina M. Barnes, and Kasey J. Martin, Undergraduate Research Methods: Does Size Matter - A Look at the Attitudes and Outcomes of Students in a Hybrid Class Format versus a Traditional Class Format, 20 *J. Crim. Just. Educ.* 231 (2009).

⁹ J. Barraket, Teaching Research Method Using a Student-Centered Approach? Critical Reflections on Practice, *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 2(2), 2005., Vol. 2, issue, 2/3, p.73.

¹⁰ Gordon, *supra* note 8, p. 229.

academic staff, particularly interactions which focus on an individual's learning and development, and engagement with and through a range of available learning resources.¹¹

If we closely examine these factors, smaller class size would enhance the active engagement of students in all classes in general, and legal research methods classes in particular. Even if it is not possible to have a hard and fast rule on the size of the class, it is clear that a lower instructor-student ratio is preferred and more fruitful than a higher instructor-student ratio. For instance, the *American Sourcebook on Legal Writing programmes* “recommends a maximum number of thirty to thirty-five students” for legal writing [research] classes.¹² Jill A. Gordon, Christina M. Barnes, and Kasey J. Martin, argue that a class of 20-35 students will help to have the active engagement of students.¹³ From these two recommendations, one can understand that there is a slight difference in the number of the ideal class conducive for the active engagement of students. Irrespective of this difference, the most important point is “[t]he type of instruction needed for quality legal writing [research] courses requires a lower faculty-student ratio because of the processes involved. Training in legal writing [research] does not conform well with ‘mass education’.”¹⁴

In Ethiopian laws schools, the class size of students taking legal research methods is not different from the class size of students taking “traditional” law courses. For instance, at Bahir Dar University it is common to have on average 50-60 students in legal research methods classes.¹⁵ The following table shows the class size of students taking legal research methods in the 2018/19 academic year in the selected nine law schools.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Bonny L. Tavares; Rebecca L. Scalo, Teaching afterDark: Part-Time Evening Students and the First-Year Legal Research & Writing Classroom, 17 *Legal Writing: J. Legal Writing Inst.* 86 (2011).

¹³ Gordon, *supra* note 8, p. 234.

¹⁴ Maureen J. Arrigo, Hierarchy Maintained: Status and Gender Issued in Legal Writing Programs, 70 *Temp. L. Rev.* 130 (1997).

¹⁵ As a course instructor this fact has been witnessed by this writer.

Table 1: Class Size of Students Taking Legal Research Methods

No.	University	Class size
1	Addis Ababa University	50
2	Arba Minch University	56
3	Assosa University	35
4	Bahir Dar University	61
5	Debre Markos University	57
6	Dilla University	40
7	Jimma University	50
8	Mizan-Tepi University	41
9	Semera University	34
10	University of Gondar	85 (Two sections)
11	Wollega University	73

1.2. Heavy Teaching Burden

Instructors teaching legal research methods should assign “[...] more active-learning tasks and encourage critical thinking and continuous lifetime learning [...]”¹⁶ Large class size coupled with the intensive and extensive assessment will obviously give rise to a heavy teaching burden on the instructor teaching legal research methods. “[...] the number of students in a research and writing class has a direct relation to the amount of work required, whereas the number of students in a traditional course has a much smaller impact on the workload, usually only on the examination-grading time.”¹⁷

From the collected data it appears that on average four to five assessments are given in legal methods courses. One of the common assessments is the development of a research proposal. It is not difficult to understand the workload of a legal research method instructor correcting all these assessments in general and the research proposal of each and every student in the class in particular. Teaching such a course is not only challenging in

¹⁶ Anzalone, *supra* note 7, p. 8.

¹⁷ Marjorie Dick Rombauer, First-Year Legal Research and Writing: Then and Now, 25 *J. Legal Educ.* 538 (1972), p. 547.

the context of Ethiopian law schools, but it is also challenging in the law schools of other jurisdictions. For instance, the teaching experience of professors at US law schools was expressed as follows: “In response to a question intended to elicit such comparison, about half of all the legal research and writing who taught other law school courses expressed the view that teaching this course was less stimulating, was more challenging, and required more work than teaching other courses.” (Emphasis added by this writer)¹⁸ The heavy teaching burden imposed on the legal research methods instructors in the selected nine law schools is summarized in the following table.

Table 2: Type and Number of Assessment

No.	University	Type of Assessment	No. of Assignments
1	Addis Ababa University	- Proposal writing and presentation - Identification of type of research, and the applicable methodology - Final exam	3
2	Arba Minch University	- Quiz - Group assignment - Proposal writing - Individual assignment	4
3	Assosa University	- Proposal writing - Six continuous assessments - Final exam	8
4	Bahir Dar University	- Quiz - Group assignment - Proposal writing - Mid exam - Final exam	5
5	Debre Markos University	- Proposal writing - Proposal presentation - Quiz - Final exam	4
6	Dilla University	- Proposal writing - Mid exam	4

¹⁸ *Id.* p. 546.

		- Class participation - Final exam	
7	Jimma University	- Quiz - Assignment - Proposal writing - Mid exam - Final exam	5
8	Semera University	- Proposal writing - Proposal presentation	2
9	Mizan-Tepi University	- Proposal writing - Research report - Class participation - Final exam	4
10	University of Gondar	- Proposal writing - Proposal presentation - Final exam	3
11	Wollega University	- Proposal writing - Six continuous assessments - Final exam	8

As it can be understood from the table, on average the selected law schools give four assessments. These four assessments coupled with the large class size impose heavy teaching load on the course instructor.

2. Timing of the Course Delivery

Teaching a legal methods course is less stimulating than teaching a doctrinal or theoretical course not only because of the class size, the number of assignments, and tasks involved in the course, but also because it involves teaching first-year students with almost no legal experience.¹⁹ In the following sub-section, this learning gap and a proposed solution will be discussed respectively.

2.1. The Learning Gap

In Ethiopian law schools, Legal Research Methods is delivered in the second semester of the first year. It is common to see first-year law students

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

struggling with the course. First-year law students are “newcomers” and have not yet been extensively exposed to “doctrinal courses”. Accordingly, they do not have a “substantive law foundation” on which they can rely, and that will help them in understand class lectures on legal research methods, and to effectively accomplish different assigned tasks in the course. This reflects a learning gap between substantive doctrinal courses and legal research methods as a skill-oriented course. This suggests that teaching a legal methods course for students who are not exposed to doctrinal courses will be futile until they have a better foundation in doctrinal legal scholarship.

According to the national LL.B curriculum, students, among other things, are required to understand or develop a research proposal.²⁰ In order to do this, however, students need to first understand the class lecture on how to select a research title, how to write the background of the study, how to articulate a statement of the problem, how to formulate research questions and research objectives, and how to develop a research design, or methodology. The next stage involves developing a research proposal. All these activities can be effectively and efficiently discharged if and only if students are armed with the basic doctrinal or substantive law knowledge. From the course breakdown in the national LL.B curriculum, one can see, however, that in the first year first semester substantive law courses are not taught. Even in the first year second semester only three substantive law courses (Law of Persons, Law of Successions, and Family Law) are offered, and they are taught in parallel with Legal Research Methods. Still, at the time when students are taking Legal Research Methods, they are *tabula rasa* when it comes to their doctrinal foundation.²¹ The challenge this writer has been facing in teaching the course to first-year students in the last eight years can be best summarized by the words of Lamar Woodard (an American legal research professor). Prof. Woodard expresses his experience and the hurdles of teaching legal research to first-year law students as follows: “teaching a

²⁰ See the LL.B curriculum on Legal Research Methods. The collected data from the sampled law schools also reveals that research proposal writing is one of the assessments used to evaluate students.

²¹ This fact was revealed through discussions with first-year students taking the course (focus group discussion among first-year law students at Bahir Dar University, moderated by Dawit Tsige, April 24, 2019).

pig to sing-the pig doesn't do it very well and certainly doesn't appreciate the lesson.”²²

2.2. Which Year, which Semester, and what to Deliver?

When it comes to the timing of the teaching of a course on legal research methods, law schools in different legal systems adopt different ways of delivering the course. Law schools in Europe and the United States (US) adopt different models in teaching legal research including the year in which the course should be taught. In the US law schools, legal research coupled with legal writing is typically offered to first-year law students.

In the American system delivering the course in the first year may not be a problem especially when it is seen from the perspective of the content of the course and the background of the students (the admission requirement). In the American system, legal research instruction is often blended with legal writing. If one closely examines the course content it mainly focuses on bibliographic instruction.²³ It is also common to see librarians rather than law professors offering legal research in general and the bibliographic instruction in particular. In the US the teaching of the course mainly focuses on the teaching of the skill of locating and finding bibliographic sources (legal bibliography). According to this approach, students are provided with different legal problems and are required to locate the appropriate state laws, federal laws, and common laws that would address the legal problem at hand.²⁴ And “students then must analyze the facts of the problem and locate relevant information in a variety of sources; this forces them to make judgments about the material they locate.”²⁵ Locating appropriate bibliographic resources and analyzing legal problems in light of the identified law does not need much doctrinal foundation and substantive knowledge compared to what students at Ethiopian law schools are expected to do in the national LL.B curriculum in their legal methods course.

²² Email from Lamar Woodard cited in Herbert E. Cihak, Teaching Legal Research: A Proactive Approach, 19 *Legal Reference Services Q.* 27 (2001), pp.30, 37.

²³ See Herbert E. Cihak, Teaching Legal Research: A Proactive Approach, 19 *Legal Reference Services Q.* 27 (2001)

²⁴ See Joyce Manna Janto & Lucinda D. Harrison-Cox, Teaching Legal Research: Past and Present, 84 *L. Libr. J.* 281 (1992).

²⁵ *Id.* p. 291.

The American legal education model is also different from the system of legal education in Ethiopia in terms of admission requirements. In the US pre-legal education—typically an undergraduate degree—is a requirement of admission to join law schools.²⁶ This requirement helps to ensure the “academic maturity” of students joining the law schools and ensure that they enter law school with prior research skills and training on research methods in their respective undergraduate degree programmes. The admission requirement of Ethiopian law schools, however, is not different from the admission requirement of any other undergraduate degree programmes: any high school graduate who passed the national university entrance exams is a candidate to join a law school. The educational background of students in these two systems will both negatively and positively affect the course understanding of students. So, compared to the Ethiopian system, students in the American system are believed to be capable and “mature candidates” who are primed to take a legal methods course in the first year of their law degree.

Law schools in Europe take a different approach. This writer believes that the model adopted by Dutch law schools is instructive as he believes this model is more appropriate to the situation and the existing problems prevailing in Ethiopian law schools. This is because the writer has found a resemblance between a set of research skills identified by the Utrecht University and the national LL.B. curriculum of Ethiopian law schools. Accordingly, the writer will look into the Utrecht University model and recommend the adoption of this model by Ethiopian law schools.

The training on legal research in The Netherlands is geared towards the graduate profile of law graduates from Dutch universities. “A student graduating with a law degree from a university in The Netherlands must be able to conduct independent research academic research.”²⁷ Research skills

²⁶ For the details of the historical development of this admission requirement see Maureen J. Arrigo, Hierarchy Maintained: Status and Gender Issued in Legal Writing Programs, 70 *Temp. L. Rev.* 117 (1997).

²⁷ Ian Curry-Sumner & Marieke van der Schaaf, The Theory and Practice of Teaching and Guiding Legal Research Skills, *Recht en Methode in onderzoek en onderwijs* 2011 (1) 1, p. 64.

and sound legal knowledge are the two important components to effectively conduct research.²⁸

To ensure that law graduates meet the intended graduate profile, the legal research methods training is different from what Ethiopian law schools are doing in two ways: first, the training is “integrated into the subject-related courses, instead of separate skills course”; and second, it covers the “entire three years of the bachelor programme”.²⁹ This approach has been chosen to fully integrate the research skill courses into substantive law courses.³⁰ This will, in turn, enable students to learn “non-subject specific [legal research] skills alongside the subject-related content.”³¹

The integrated legal research skills training at Utrecht follows the structure of the course breakdown in the law degree programme. The course breakdown has three main sections distributed according to the three years of the programme: a Foundational section, a Core section, and a Choice section. “These three sections also form the basis for instruction in the research skills.”³² The teaching process goes as follows.³³

I. Foundational section

This section covers the first semester of the first year. In the first semester, students are exposed to the basic principle of law (*Grondslagen van het Recht*). In this section, foundational research skills are taught along with these basic principles of law. These foundational research skills include citation, “structure, legal reasoning and reporting”.

II. Core section

The next two semesters are devoted to eight core subjects (*kernvakken*): property law, the law of obligations (contract and tort), substantive criminal law, criminal procedural law, constitutional law, administrative law, international law, and European law. The research

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Id.* p. 75.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Id.* p. 76

³³ *See Id.* p. 76 ff.

skill component or counterpart of this section covers “core research skills” that will help students to find appropriate statutory or case laws and address content related legal problems.

III. Choice section

In the remaining three semesters, students choose courses “within a range of specific groupings” (*algemene rechtsleer*). The research skills line of this section is tailored to the nature of the specialized course taught. Students in this section are “introduced to the most complicated research skills” and are taught how to choose a research area and how to formulate a research question.

As pointed out before, this writer thinks that it is important to consider the Utrecht approach to the teaching of legal research methods in the Ethiopian laws schools, among things, for one main reason. Regardless of the difference in the duration of the study³⁴, the Ethiopian LL.B. national curriculum, like the one in Utrecht, has been structured into three “modules”: Core modules, Elective courses, and General modules.³⁵ This does not mean that the list and the nature of courses in these three modules mirror the structure and the content of courses in the Utrecht system. For instance, in the Ethiopian curriculum, the core module is replete with “foundational courses” and “core courses”; while the general module contains only two courses: English for Lawyers, and Information and Communications Technology. So, courses that are by their nature foundational but which are grouped under the Core course should be switched to the General modules.³⁶

After suitable restructuring is done the legal research methods training in Ethiopian law schools can be offered in line with the three modules. Like the Utrecht system, in the general (foundational) modules an introductory course on legal research could be offered. This introductory course should cover topics such as the meaning, type, and nature of research; the nature of legal research; citation and documentation sources; plagiarism and research; and

³⁴ The regular programme of the law schools in Ethiopia leading to the award of LL.B. degree takes five years.

³⁵ The 2012/13 revised and modularized LL.B. Curriculum.

³⁶ This writer believes that courses in the Core modules such as Introduction to Law, Legal History and Traditions, Introduction to the Ethiopian Legal System, Customary Law, Introduction to Logic, Jurisprudence, and Legal Research Methods should be grouped under the General modules.

so on, and could be aligned with Law of Persons, Family Law, and Law of Successions. In the core courses, the scope of the legal research methods course will become more advanced and tailored to the substantive courses students are taking. On this model, by the time that students engage in more advanced legal methods instruction they will have been acquainted with some substantive courses, and they will be in a position to appreciate and understand more complex legal problems. In this phase the following themes can be covered: identification of legal problems, locating appropriate legal sources, and the skills of applying the law to the issues at hand and solving the legal problems. In the last phase, the elective courses, the full-fledged research process including the skills of research proposal development can be covered. In this phase the following legal research skills should be taught: identification of research ideas; selection of research topics; formulation of research problems and research questions; setting research objectives; and preparing a research design. As with the first two phases, here the skills training should be aligned to the elected substantive courses and courses taught in the preceding semesters. This will, in turn, equip students with the necessary research skills and make them better able to effectively administer and write their final year LL.B. essay.³⁷

If a model along these lines is adopted in Ethiopian law schools legal research methods will in effect become a three-semester course. This raises an obvious question: how many credit hours should be allocated in the three semesters? It has been mentioned that a heavy teaching burden is one of the hurdles instructors are facing. Because of this it is neither feasible nor fair to teach the course as it stands today as a three hour course. Taking into account the teaching burden and the respective issues to be addressed in the three semesters, this writer recommends allocating two credit hours for each of the three semesters; ultimately the course will cover six credit hours in the LL.B. programme.

³⁷ This writer witnessed deterioration in the quality of the final year LL.B. essays from time to time. Instructors advising and examining final year LL.B. essays (at Bahir Dar University) have also complained about the poor quality of most of the works.

3. The Teaching, Research, and Publication Experiences of Instructors

As has been pointed out repeatedly, legal research is a skill-oriented course. Students learn the course by doing. Instructors are expected to teach mainly by referring to their research and publication experiences. As a result, the research and publication profiles of the instructor are pivotal in teaching legal research compared to other traditional courses. The instructor must be able to teach the course “by doing”. The importance of learning legal research by doing and the role of the instructor in the process of learning has been stated by Wesley Jr. Gilmer four decades before as follows:

The skills of legal research and legal writing are akin to the skills of playing baseball and football, the skills of playing the piano and guitar, and the skills of driving an automobile. People learn those skills mainly by doing them. None of them can be learned solely by listening to someone tell how they do them, by reading about the way to do them, or by watching someone else do them. Requiring the law student to perform the operations himself is the way to teach legal research and writing. Guided experience for the student, along a way known to the teacher, with a realistic objective before the student, will teach the types of literature, its contents, a method of research, and how to apply them via a writing. (Emphasis added by this writer)³⁸

So, unlike the traditional courses, the guidance of the instructor is invaluable to the effective teaching of legal research methods. In turn, the guidance of the instructor will be fruitful and effective only if it is embedded in the teaching, research and publication experiences of the instructor. In emphasizing the importance of the experience of the instructor teaching legal research Gilmer adds the following:

Regardless of how long one has been in the legal profession, each day constitutes a unique opportunity to learn something new about the monster called legal research. This point should not be passed by, without noting that daily exposure is the way that each of us learned how to do legal research, from the first day that we attempted it, to the day when we supposed we were at our best. This admission is the keystone of effective

³⁸ Wesley Jr. Gilmer, Teaching Legal Research and Legal Writing in American Law Schools, 25 *J. Legal Educ.* 571(1972), p. 571.

teaching of legal research and legal writing. Experience is an excellent educator, especially for this field, where even the teachers must perpetually strive to improve their own knowledge. (Emphasis added by this writer)³⁹

When it comes to the experience of instructors in the selected law schools, the data reveal that there is significant diversity in the academic rank, teaching, research, and publication experiences of instructors teaching legal research methods.

Table 3: The Academic Rank of Instructors Teaching Legal Research Methods in the LL.B. Programme

No.	University	Academic Rank
1	Addis Ababa University	Assistant Professor
2	Arba Minch University	Assistant Lecturer
3	Assosa University	Assistant Lecturer
4	Bahir Dar University	Assistant Professor
5	Debre Markos University	Lecturer
6	Dilla University	Assistant Lecturer
7	Jimma University	Assistant Lecturer
8	Mizan-Tepi University	Lecturer
9	Semera University	Lecturer
10	University of Gondar	Associate Professor
11	Wollega University	Lecturer

With the exception of Addis Ababa University, Bahir Dar University and University of Gondar, legal research methods instructors are exclusively lecturers and assistant lecturers. In four law schools, instructors are teaching with the rank of assistant lecturer. It is clear that instructors with the rank of assistant lecturer are newly employed young LL.B. graduates with no teaching, research and publication experiences. Even instructors with the rank of lecturer do not have rich research and publication experience except doing their final year LL.M essay and undertaking one to two research projects. A lack of experience in teaching, research and publication will

³⁹ *Ibid.*

negatively affect the quality of education that students get in their legal methods courses.

Concluding Remarks

After completing the LL.B. programme, graduates are expected to have acquired the skill and competence, among other things, to render high-quality research service to organizations, undertake independent research in areas of law, and research and publish to reinforce the Ethiopian legal jurisprudence.⁴⁰ To acquire these skills, competence, and knowledge the teaching of legal research methods should be revisited so that students will receive quality education and skill training. Three changes in particular would, in the opinion of this writer, make significant positive differences. First, large class sizes should be reduced to enable more active participation of students and to reduce the heavy teaching load imposed on instructors. Here, it is possible to think of having two small classes instead of one large class. Second, the existing curriculum and the course breakdown should be restructured. Specifically, it would be helpful if Legal Research Methods is offered as a three-semester introductory, core, and advanced course that follows the established substantive and doctrinal knowledge of students. It has been suggested that the Utrecht model might be one to emulate. Finally, it appears that the teaching, research and publication experiences of most of the instructors currently teaching legal research methods at Ethiopian law schools hampers the quality of education and the skill training that they can offer to LL.B. students. With that in mind, law schools should employ and assign competent and qualified senior instructors who have extensive teaching, research, and publication experiences to teach courses in legal research methods. If these three changes are made, it is the opinion of this writer that legal research methods courses can be more fruitfully integrated into the LL.B. programmes of Ethiopian law schools, to the benefit of both students and instructors.

⁴⁰ The professional profile, graduate profile and the specific objective of the 2012/13 revised and modularized LL.B. Curriculum of Ethiopian Law Schools.