

Enhancing Teaching and Learning at the Law Faculty, Ethiopian Civil Service College

Solomon Abay*

Introduction

Teaching and learning is a process to bring about a relatively permanent change in the behavior (cognitive, affective and psychomotor) of the learner. It has to create some enhancement in the self-concept of the learner and activate his/her future learning. It has to result in a meaningful understanding of content by the learner.

Though defining quality of teaching and learning is difficult, it can be understood to refer to the achievement of the aforementioned outcomes. Enhancing quality of teaching and learning may, then, mean enhancing the achievement of such outcomes.

Several factors will influence such enhancement. Some are the curriculum, the learners variables, the text, the teaching and learning methods, the profile of the teachers, the environment for teaching and learning, and the evaluation.

The subsequent parts are devoted to discussion of these and related items. Conclusions and recommendations parts are added at the end. The reader has to be warned that the information in this material is not a result of a scientific investigation despite the truth in it. It is a result of observation as a participant in a national workshop on higher education in Ethiopia conducted at the Institute of Educational Research (IER) of the Addis Ababa University from August 13 to September 4, 2001.

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Curriculum

In a limited sense, curriculum is an outline of a course of study. In broader sense, it includes all experiences of the learner in a school setting. One need not understand curriculum in rigid or open-ended sense. Yet, four layers of curriculum can be considered. These are the *intended curriculum* (i.e., the curriculum intended by the policy makers), the *expressed curriculum* (i.e., the part of the intended curriculum implemented by the instructor), the *hidden curriculum* (i.e., the unintended part-side effect of the intended curriculum- that comes out through the interaction between the instructor and the learner), and the *experienced curriculum* (i.e., the experience the student derives from the class-room interaction and the school setting).

Taking these into account, one may proceed to say that the way the curriculum is developed or designed and implemented has an impact on the quality of teaching and learning besides other factors. The prominent models of curriculum development these days are the objective, the process and the situational models. The first focuses on aim or outcome, the second in the experience/knowledge of the learner and the third on the situation for learning. Sticking to one model is not advisable. All the best has to be taken from the models. Hence, the objective model is usually followed by the elements of the process and situational models. The curriculum development has, then, to pass through some important steps such as identification or selection of educational objectives, selection and organization of content and learning experience and evaluation. The process has to involve all stakeholders. The design of the curriculum may be problem-centered, learner-centered, subject-centered or broad-field. The difference here is a matter of emphasis. Hence, one can have a curriculum of one type with elements from the others.

Initially, the curriculum of the Law Faculty of the ECSC was adopted from the curriculum of the Law Faculty of the Addis Ababa University. It was largely course list and syllabus. It was not subjected to the objective, the process as well as the situational models of curriculum

development. Until the end of 2000, the curriculum development was largely about the objectives of the program, graduate profile, course listing and syllabus construction. The recent revision was made in 2001 in collaboration with the Law Faculty of the University of Amsterdam and added course objectives, course outline, mode of delivery and mode of assessment. Attempt was made to assess need through workshops and to make the curriculum need based; expatriate subject specialists and few teachers were influential. The scope of the curriculum was shaped mainly by expert opinion. No rigorous procedure existed. Both the initial adoption and the subsequent revisions were done by ad hoc committees, hence, lacking continuity.

The curriculum is not fully developed yet. Its implementation is also left to the full discretion of the individual instructors and this has sometimes resulted in discrepancy in the implementation of the intended curriculum.

Learner Variables

The prior knowledge, general intellectual ability, locus of control, cognitive style, self-concept, anxiety and motivation of the learners have a lot to do with the teaching-learning process. Both the curriculum development and the teaching and learning process have to take note of these.

Experience at the Law Faculty of the ECSC has shown the prevalence of the following learners variables:

- little proficiency in the language of instruction;
- weak intellectual ability and experience;
- large gap in intellectual ability and experience;
- old age;

- family responsibility
- special need (due to impairment and disability);
- resistance to learning due to strong value for religion;
- ethnic segregation and self-misconception;
- power complexity;
- little concept on how to learn;
- too much expectation from teacher; and
- excessive anxiety about difficulty of courses and evaluation.

All these have to be taken into account in a move to enhance teaching and learning at the Faculty.

Text and Equipment

The existence of teaching materials (text books) and their organization and clarity and the availability of proper equipment facilities influence teaching and learning.

Almost all the courses offered at the Law Faculty of the ECSC are not supported by teaching materials or textbooks designed in the context of the faculty. The teaching learning process depends much on the selection and organization of handouts and extracts by the individual teacher.

This is fragmented. Equipment and materials such as overhead projectors, audio-visuals, films and flip charts are hardly available. All teachers depend much on the chalk and the board. Hence steps have to be taken to make the teaching and learning process effective and to support it by the necessary text and equipment.

Teaching-Learning Methods

Use of varied methods and techniques of teaching and learning can address different variables that influence teaching and learning and contribute to the enhancement of quality. There is no one best method of teaching and learning because the learners styles of learning vary.

The intention advocated at the Law Faculty of the ECSC is to make all the teaching and learning process learner-centered. However, there is wide variation among teachers and teacher-centeredness has much influence. Little is done to promote the employment of varied methods and techniques of teaching and learning and a lot has to be done ahead.

Profile of Teachers

The scientific and artistic qualities of the teachers have major influence in teaching and learning. Teachers need the necessary knowledge of subject-matter and the necessary qualities of a teacher. In particular, teachers in higher education must possess the profile of a higher education teacher: a teacher, researcher and community service giver.

Currently, the teachers at the Law Faculty of the ECSC are mainly teachers. They conduct very little research and community service. One can imagine several factors for this. The research and community service roles of the teachers have to be enhanced as these roles have much to contribute to the quality of teaching and learning. The Faculty (College) has to invest on its human capital.

Environmental Variables

Opportunities for field practice, the academic calendars the regulation of class hour and size, the social value of the college in general and of the field of study in particular, the job opportunity, the

accommodation or facility of teachers and learners are all crucial factors in teaching and learning.

The students at the Law Faculty of the ECSC have little exposure to practice because of the nature of the curriculum. The academic calendar is tight - both the students and the teachers are always fighting with shortage of time. The class hour and size do not allow flexible use of teaching and learning methods. As part of the College, the Faculty faces image problem. Despite the otherwise reality, a large section of the society considers it as a political school and this has sometimes affected access to information for research and study. Job opportunity is not a problem today as almost all the students are civil servants. There is also no serious accommodation and facility problem though there is a need for continuous improvement. A lot has, therefore, to be done around the environmental variables if teaching and learning at the Faculty has to be enhanced.

Evaluation

This has to be seen in two directions. Testing students for achievement is one thing. Evaluation of the teaching and learning process is another. Both can be employed for feedback collection and for administrative purposes. The target of all has to be improvement.

Both evaluations are now employed at the Law Faculty of ECSC mainly for administrative purpose. Testing students for achievement is left to the complete discretion of the teachers. Though the focus is on application (case) type examination, the teachers employ testing as they wish. No mechanism exists to check the quality of tests except the trust put on each teacher. The Faculty has decided that testing of students has to be continuous. No measurement criteria is set out for common application.

The teachers prefer a criteria referenced system to the statistical (normative) system. Though this may be good, it has resulted in some

arbitrariness due to the challenges of the environmental variables on the criteria referenced evaluation system.

The teaching and learning process is evaluated every term. Up to now, this has been mainly student evaluation of teachers and staff discussion with management. A system whereby the evaluation will be done by students, peers and heads is in process of implementation under an assumption that it will bring about better outcome. The evaluation instruments are designed in a way that will assess the achievement of the teachers as higher education teachers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A lot has to be done in the areas of curriculum development, knowing learners, development and supply of teaching materials and equipment, adoption of teaching and learning methods, enhancement of teacher's role, improvement of the environment for teaching and learning and evaluation. The following are recommended.

The curriculum of the Faculty has to be continuously revised following the steps:

- identifying social needs or problems;
- reviewing existing curriculum against the new needs or problems;
- reviewing constraints under which the old curriculum had to operate and the constraints for the new curriculum;
- stating the rationale for the new curriculum;
- stating aims, goals and objectives of the new curriculum;
- stating graduate profile and program requirements;
- selecting content;
- selecting learning experience (methods and materials);
- matching content, learning experience and context and organization; and
- evaluating the curriculum

The objective model of curriculum development has to be used with elements of the process and situation analysis models. The curriculum design has to be problem-centered with elements from learner-centeredness, subject-centeredness and a broad field design. The curriculum has to clearly spell out the identified needs or problems, the educational aims, goals and objectives, the educational philosophy - the basis for content and learning experience selection and organization, the content and learning experience, and the ways for curriculum implementation and assessment. Both the content and the experience have to be valid, comprehensive, varied, suitable, relevant to life and feasible. The organization has to be done taking into account continuity, sequence, scope and integration. Both formative and summative evaluations have to be carried out to make the curriculum meaningful. A permanent center has to be established in the Faculty that will perform all these tasks in collaboration with other organs of the College.

Each step of curriculum development has to pass through rigorous procedure.

- The admission criteria must be designed in a way that can minimize the problem around the learners' variables. It has to include age requirements and tests that will ensure language proficiency, reasoning and intellectual ability and experience. The admission has to be open and competitive.
- Measures should be taken in the after admission stage to overcome the negative effects of the learners' variables on the teaching learning process. This may include orientation, continuous guidance and counseling, some affirmative action to female students and provision of special facilities to students with special needs.
- Teachers at the Faculty should be motivated to prepare teaching materials and equipment. The Faculty has to institutionalize the task and supply the necessary resource and reward.

- Teachers at the Faculty should be enabled to act as teachers, researchers and community service givers. Steps should be taken to fulfill the personal and institutional factors for these. Hence, the following are necessary:
- The teachers should develop interest and competence in teaching, research and community service. They should conduct action research to know their learners with a view to improve the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process at the faculty. They should conduct applied research and community services to enhance subject-matter knowledge and to contribute to the efforts aimed at solving social problems.
- The Faculty has to
 - employ teachers on the basis of subject-matter knowledge and teaching, research and community serving skills and attitudes;
 - train existing staff continuously to create such skills and attitudes;
 - technologize the teaching and learning process; and take all the necessary measures to motivate and facilitate research, community service and employment of different methods and techniques of teaching. The latter may include material (such as computer, overhead projector, flip chart and audio-visual) and financial supply, creation of access to information (such as networking and facilitation of the internet for research rather than for mail use, and measures to be taken on the environmental variables of the teaching and learning, research and community service such as adoption of sufficient breathing time within the academic calendar, lowering class size, reducing teaching load, exposing staff to experience outside the college, giving sufficient

accommodation, and taking measures that will establish positive image to the faculty as part of the college.

- establish pedagogy, research and community service centers in the College to facilitate all the above.'
- Take measures to enable publication of findings in all the above processes.
- The teaching and learning, research and community service processes have to be continuously evaluated.

The faculty has to design a system for conducting action and summative assessment of the teaching and learning, research and community service processes. The main objective must be to get feedback for improvement rather than exclusively for administrative measures. The assessment has to see the factors, the processes and the outcomes of each process. Measures must also be taken to enable continuous testing of student performance. The testing as well as the measurement has to be standardized.

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