

## **Factors Affecting Teaching Performance of "Fresh Teachers": The Case of Arbaminch Water Technology Institute**

Tekalign Zewdie

### **Introduction**

The education sector strategy nowadays lays down the school education structure with the deep initiation to express the objectives of education and professional development.

Professional development is strongly advocated for teaching effectiveness in relation to the transmission of meaningful pedagogical skills. When teachers provide their lesson, it is expected that learners will bring certain behavioral changes. So, an important question to ask is whether teachers in institutions of higher learning are working effectively for the success of the educational process.

The aim of this paper is to examine the teaching performance of fresh teachers in Arba Minch Water Technology Institute (AWTI). These teachers join the teaching profession from two directions: direct graduates from the University and terminators from other job sectors. In spite of the fact that they have the scientific knowledge, they are not effective in handling pedagogical skills.

Some of the teachers have experience. There was a workshop about the educational process in the Institute in corporation with the British Council. Teachers had the chance to share experiences through informal discussion. This study discusses this.

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### **Objectives**

- to discuss teaching in higher education in AWTI's context;
- to identify the teachers' misconception in teaching;

- to recommend possible solutions for clearing the misconceptions.

Teachers have knowledge of the subject matter in higher education but teaching is more than knowledge of subject matter. According to Harvey and Knight (1996), teaching is a planned effort to bring about learning in others. This means that teaching needs special educational skills and awareness about learners. Since learning enhances the self-concept of the individual the teachers have the responsibility to develop the interest of their students by devising effective strategies for processing information.

Planning contributes to forward meaningful input in the educational process. Teachers should note the importance of planning in the educational objective achievement. The teachers' plans should focus on the fulfillment of the two dimensions of lesson objectives: behavioral objectives and content objectives. Textbooks, course books, 'old handouts' or otherwise are a means to plan lessons rather than an end by themselves. Because of this, teachers plan teaching to bring about learning in students.

The lesson objective, in planning, takes into consideration the educational consequence of the study. It describes the desired learning outcomes to bring about long lasting changes in acquisition, attitude and skill.

### **Teachers and Input**

Providing comprehensible input (Krashen: 1981) for learners at a given time and a given scope is considered to be the concern of teachers in higher education. It helps to obtain a desired effect in regard to the intended objectives. The following points create authentic situation to the teachers in the educational process.

- Learners autonomy

- Real-world situation
- In-text challenges

### **Learners Autonomy**

Teachers are expected to initiate students to be involved actively in the teaching-learning process. Firstly initiation takes place when the teachers consider the prior experience of the learners. Since knowledge is developmental, the background of the learners will give meaning to the planned lesson for behavioral objectives' change.

Secondly, the learners' performance has an impact in the educational process. The teachers are to be duty bound to satisfy learners' preference. The learners' preference can be auditory, visual, kinesthetic or tactile (Ellis: 1994). The learners' cognitive style is also another factor. Some of the learners are analytical who see concepts specifically and some are global who see the general concepts of a given context.

To sum up, when teachers consider learners' autonomy, they have to see the humanistic orientation in terms of learners' prior experience, learning preference and learning style.

### **Real World Situation**

Teachers use real world situation to provide meaningful input in the lesson. Media and didactic conversation are a means to create the situation possible in the educational setting. Media include the range from concrete objects to abstract signal. Computer is one of concrete examples nowadays when teachers use electric circuit board in a class. The lesson would be effective and meaningful.

Holmerg's theory of didactic conversation is a good mechanism to create real situation the classroom. It emphasizes that interaction will facilitate the educational process. The teacher, as a councilor, will help in forming of pairs and groups of learners. This helps not only the

learners to engage in interaction meaningfully but also the teachers to facilitate the lesson properly. The teachers' presentation of the lesson with up-to-date and 'here and now' situation will involve learners to achieve the desired objectives.

### **In-text Challenge**

The teachers present a new input with a challenge for the learners' understanding. The challenge can be provided in the problem-solving approach, self-conception or otherwise. The learners, hence, engage in the discovery activity where self-monitoring takes place. It bridges the gap between the learners' prior experience and the new input. The challenge also allows divergent thinking in the discussion and the sharing of experience.

The other challenge is the teach-back activities, which help learners to shape their self-concept. Learners assess themselves in comparison with other learners. The teachers, however, should manage the learners' motivation since weak learners may feel inferior and develop anxiety. The teachers' duty is to emphasize co-operative activities.

For all success, the learners need time to think and rethink the challenge in the process of their mind. Eventually, they develop high level of cognitive style like analyzing a different context of a new input.

### **Teachers and Feedback**

Evaluation focuses on discovering whether the plan of a specific subject matter is producing a desired result. The teachers need feedback to see their planned outcome.

### **Teaching Method**

The teachers evaluate the teaching method in relation to the learners' behavioral change and the content of the course. The internal and

external efficiency achievement confirm the very success of the teaching method. The learners need the internal one; this can be in the student-centered approach in which interaction reveals the method. But the content matter also needs a method to go with the planned process. This helps to be in parallel with other related institute's coverage.

### **Implementation**

Evaluation shows how much the intended content is implemented in the educational process. The teachers provide the content in organized way, simple manner and clear form. This intended content, however, may be embedded with invisible content and expressed content. Learners may raise issues from their prior experience in class. Teachers also from the immediate classroom situation can raise new ideas. Evaluation, therefore, makes explicit these situation contents and the intended uncovering content from the covering one.

By comparing the actual results and expected outcomes, the teachers know whether the objectives are achieved. By revising the effectiveness of the intended plan, teachers will get feedback.

### **Situational Analysis**

ArbaMinch Water Technology Institute's fresh teachers understand teaching as one way dimension: They have banking-concepts of education. This comes from the wrong conception of the meaning of 'teacher'. The usual assumptions include that a teacher is:

- autonomous;
- transmitter of knowledge;
- for the scientific aspects of education;
- to test learners' capacity to recall.

These misconceptions lead teachers to:

- encourage learners to operate raw data as it is

- be ignorant for the artistic quality of teaching
- be unable to see the in-visible content from the learners' side
- stick on the teacher-centered approach
- take textbooks for granted
- test learners whether they recall 'golden words'.

As a result, learners assume teachers as decision makers in their behavioral change. Learners expect the product of their test than the process of teaching learning environment.

### **Teachers and Samples**

*Planned Input:* Teachers planned input is the adopted one (e.g. textbook). Teachers see the textbook as an end by itself. If we see *College English*, the textbook is a ready-made one and the teachers adopt it as it is. This would lead learners to copy the exercises, assignments and others from senior students' work.

*Authentic Mode:* Since there are shortage of teachers in the institute, fresh teachers teach even third year classes. The higher the class level, the more practical the student centered approach becomes. Learners in irrigation department, for example, learn different irrigation systems. The teacher, hence, should demonstrate the lesson in a concrete way to the learners. These teachers, however, are not fit to adapt themselves to different teaching methods.

*Prior Experience:* Teachers lack readiness to understand and identify learners' learning situation (e.g. cognitive style) and previous experience. Learners join the Institute from different background. Some learners join from technical schools and institutes. Others from natural science field. Here, definitely, learners from technical institute get vital motivation from the teachers but learners from other fields are demotivated and this leads to frustration and anxiety.

*Feedback Tracing:* Teachers do assessment, but this is not for feedback. They use it for instrumental motives that come from the banking-concept of education. Another side is that if learners ask questions (probably simple for the teachers), the teachers belittle their questions and devastate the inquisitive mind of the learners. These teachers' assessment is a negative reinforcement with undesirable effect on the learners.

## **Conclusion**

The importance of professional performance/development in higher education in general and in ArbaMinch Water Technology Institute in particular is an undeniable fact though it is a complex one for the teachers to act and then interact. The teachers should consider the artistic quality of teaching. Teachers will boost their effectiveness when they give attention to learners as well as content variables. Therefore, having pedagogical skills to see the need and aspiration of the learners is an ethical issue in the educational process. Based on these skills the teachers will develop planning their subject matter to provide effective and comprehensible input. In closing, it is important to note that the responsible bodies should react to address the issues discussed.

## **Recommendation**

The following important elements/ideas are recommended. The teachers can be effective when they:

- focus on problem-solving approach;
- create an integration of learners with the content objectives'
- target for behavioral change of the learner;
- plan comprehensible input;
- identify the social relevant for the improvement of teaching-learning process; and
- involve themselves in action research



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