

Curriculum Materials Designing and Delivery Practices versus Quality in Higher Education Institutions of Ethiopia

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Abstract

The main intent of this article was to explore the procedures of curriculum designing and delivery practices in higher education institutions (HEIs) and its implication to the provision of quality education. The study took Bahir Dar University as a case in order to explore the issue via qualitative research. Data were secured through interview, personal reflection and observation. Thirteen interviewees (10 teachers and 3 students), who have deep and relevant information about the problem under study, have identified purposively. The study found that establishing an institution (university), faculty and program/department is accomplished with more of social, political and economical based decisions. But there are intellectual endeavours that deal about the soft ware (curriculum designing and delivery practices) dimensions of HEIs. This implies that courses within the department and the detail curriculum materials (contents, learning experiences and assessment techniques) within the course are mainly designed and delivered by teachers and students of the HEIs. This practice is critically important to ensure the healthy life of the whole system of the HEIs. It is because contents and learning experiences are the corner stone for student's behavioural change which can be taken as the major consequences to explain quality in education. The study further explained that due to the assumption that HE teachers are excellent academia, independent, responsible and researchers with plenty of resources and library facilities, content selections and implementations are left for them. This sort of academic freedom and autonomy, for some newly employed teachers, serve as a shelter, to manage the teaching learning practices depending only with their own minimal experiences and scope. Therefore, the selection and delivery practices of HEIs' lesson might be remained below the standard. This could be taken as significant barrier for moving towards quality education provision in HEIs. Other teachers, on the other hand, have used this sort of freedom to maximize innovative and active engagement of their students and themselves in doing the lesson at the expected standard. This initiated good teaching and learning practices which in turn calls quality in education. In general, this article recommended that university teachers have to recognize the given freedom (to select and deliver the detail contents and learning experiences of courses) to manipulate the assigned courses need to be taken as an opportunity in offering HEIs' learning experiences beyond the available knowledge which are indicated in the syllabi. The article advised HEIs are better to appreciate group lesson designing (and if possible team teaching/delivery of courses) and the applications of friendly supervision, which of course instruction based, particularly for novice teachers.

Keywords: Curriculum materials, Higher education, Teaching-learning, quality education

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Teaching learning processes in higher education institutes (HEIs) have to be with reflection and in such a way that to provoke the classroom community towards innovativeness. That is, monitoring, criticizing, revising and when necessary defending what you implement and how you implement a lesson are some of the most important activities for the university academia. University education therefore is expecting not only to teach and learn effectively what currently available as a guaranteed knowledge but also need to think something out of the box (norm, rule or truth for today) in order to fit for the dynamism of the future world. In this regard, Brockbank and McGill (2007) contended that higher education institutes need to work in producing transformative agents/graduates for the society who critically reflect and able to cope with a rapidly changing world. To realize this behaviour, university students need to raise the why and how questions in their learning engagements. Thus, students should work and study in an educational system that enables them to transform their conceptual ability and their self-awareness through engaging in critical and transformative actions and the ability to 'shuttle backwards and forwards . . . between practice and theory in order to get the centre of things and/or ideas (Darwin 2000). For these reasons, the boundary of university curriculum is permeable or loose. That is, with a sort of guide line (syllabus) developed for a course, teachers and students are left to search more detail contents, learning experiences and assessment strategies (Toohey 1999; Cullingford, 2004).

The prominent author in the field of higher education, Clark (1983:11), moreover, contended that "as long as higher education has been formally organized, it has been a social structure for the control of advanced knowledge and technique. Its basic materials or substances are the bodies of advanced ideas and related skills

that comprise much of the more esoteric culture of nations.” Clark further elucidated that the discovery of knowledge is an open-ended task and expected from the practices of HEIs. In addition, it is an assignment that can be treated through manipulations of the unknown and the uncertain rather than only dealing with the rationale means of attending the already known and defined ends (Clark 1983).

Higher education is the leading part of the education system of a country by searching and identifying innovative ideas for the whole school system in the nation and then to enhance the overall development of the society. In support of this, Teshome (2003) noted that for higher education none of its responsibilities is greater than that of contributions to the maintenance and continuous improvement of the whole education system of which it is the leading part. Higher Education Proclamation of Ethiopia initiated that higher education learners have to acquire pertinent scientific knowledge, independent thinking skills and professional values that together prepare him/her to become a competent and change agent professional (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, FDRE, 2009). Therefore, it is possible to conclude that higher education throughout the world including Ethiopia is responsible to lead the whole development aspects of the nation in general and the education system in particular through wise management of the available and advanced knowledge and skills. In cognizance with this, examining the ways that helps HEIs to be innovative and fit for the future world is an agenda which seems sounding to foster quality in the overall education system of the nation. Hence, curricular issue (its selection and delivery) in Ethiopian higher education should be taken in to account because, according to Taba (1962) and Tyler (1949), the curriculum is the vehicle/heart of all other activities in educational institutions, without it the objectives never realized.

University teachers, unlike secondary and primary schools, are responsible to select and implement detail contents and learning experiences of the course which they assign to teach. This is an opportunity for the university academia (students and teachers) to maximize their innovation power instead of dealing with highly pre-described contents and learning experiences. In this regard, Toohey (1999) stated that teachers in higher education retain a very significant advantage over the teacher in other branches of education; their control of the curriculum. In much of primary, secondary and technical and vocational education, course design has been handed over to experts; to the impoverishment of the role of classroom teacher. Yet course design is an advantage for of which many teachers in universities seems quite an aware (Cullingford 2004). This is because much of the creativity and power in teaching lies in the designing of the curriculum, the choice of the texts and ideas, the planning of learning experiences/opportunities for students and the means by which achievement is assessed. These activities together with the delivery accomplished are the most determinant factors to provide quality education.

Quality in education normally determined with three important aspects: Input, process-put and output. Lockheed and Verspoor (1991), as cited in Derebssa (2006), noted that educational quality standards normally related with the quality standard of educational inputs (teaching materials, qualified teachers, parent and community support and other facilities), processes (effective leadership, monitoring and evaluation, accountability, community participation, effective teaching-learning and student assessment) and outputs (student learning, societal and individual problem solving, better treatment of the physical and social environment). The inputs are the starting and basic aspects for the journey of the education system. This is because it is obvious that the quality of students, teachers, curricular materials, educational furniture and buildings determines the sum total quality of the inputs and then the clarity and standard of the second quality measurement component- the processes and then determines the quality of the output at last (Birza, et al. 2005).

The process, I think, is a matter of organizing and putting everything together in order to obtain sound outputs. This quality determinant stage (the process) includes teachers’ teaching, students’ learning, principals and other officers’/experts/ leading and monitoring, supervisors’ supervision, students’ performance assessment and parents’ involvement. Therefore, it is possible to generalize that all the three stages or components of quality measurement are highly interrelated with a fashion that one is a necessary condition for the other. But the process (particularly teachers and students’ lesson designing and delivering practices) is central either to lead towards better outcomes with insufficient inputs or to lead towards ineffective and minimal outcomes from well organized and well availed inputs (Carlson 2000). This, in other words, shows the strong impacts of course designing and delivery practices, which include classroom teaching and learning, on quality education that will be obtained. With this in mind, this paper was intended to explore the procedures of curriculum designing and implementation in HEIs of Ethiopia and its implication to quality education.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Ethiopia, which is located in the East Horn of Africa, possesses a 1,700-year tradition of elite education linked to her Orthodox Church. But secular higher education was initiated only in 1950 with the foundation of the University College of Addis Ababa which followed by the establishment of some specialized technical colleges (Saint 2004). Though the then institutions hosted an educational culture that was heavily influenced by its long informal association with the Orthodox Church (Wagaw 1990, as cited in Saint 2004), in their academic

organization they were somewhat more of the American model than the British (Saint 2004).

In 1974, a socialist military coup overthrew the monarchy of Emperor Haile Selassie and established an oppressive regime known as the 'Derg' (i.e., committee). In the 'Derg' system, government intervention in university affairs was highly expanded, including security surveillance, repression of dissent, mandated courses on Marxism, prohibition of student organizations, appointment of senior university officers and control of academic promotions (Saint 2004). And he further noted the country's education system became largely isolated from the western world and attached to the socialist camp (USSR and East Germany).

In the present government of Ethiopia (Ethiopian Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, FDRE), which has started to rule in 1991, HEIs are unexpectedly expanded. Currently, HEIs of Ethiopia incorporates only 31 universities which offered bachelor degrees (with 3, 4, 5 or 6 years of study) as well as post graduate degrees (masters and PhD degree in 2 and 4 years study respectively) (MoE 2010; FDRE 2009).

In Ethiopian HEIs most graduates are poor in skills to apply the knowledge they gained from the universities in to the real world of work. In the beginning of the twenty first century, moreover, Ethiopia found itself with a HEIs that was high state control in its management, non-flexible in its intellectual orientation, limited in its autonomy, short of experienced and well qualified academic staffs, declining in educational quality, weak in its research output and poorly connected with the intellectuals across the international higher education community (Teshome 2005; Saint 2004). This calls a reform in the Ethiopian HEIs. Therefore, higher education reform was embraced as a critical national need by the government of the day. The current government therefore has prepared and actualized The Higher Education Proclamation (FDRE 2003), which was the first in its kind. It was a major step to forward and show policy and strategy directions of the sector in Ethiopia. This comprehensive proclamation provides a thoughtful and forward-looking policy framework for guiding the reform towards the growth of Ethiopian higher education (Teshome 2005).

The higher education reform tries to revise some dogmas and then to meet the established agendas of HEIs of Ethiopia. In addition to its traditional role of educating, creating knowledge and developing the mind, it is increasingly asked, for example, being student-centred, practice-oriented, quality-focused, community-focused in training, and to teach professions that require skills to handle actual professional tasks in the future world, which can be taken as the best indicators of ensuring quality in the theory as well as practice dimensions of HEIs (Teshome 2005). With this in mind, the reforms of HEIs of Ethiopia have involved in different levels. At the system level, for example, the numbers of universities increase from 2 to 31. universities, which relatively have enjoyed substantial autonomy to manage academic programs flexibly. In addition to these reform attempts, since there were irrelevancies and scarcity of qualities in the designing and delivering of the curriculum, the curricular aspects of Ethiopian HEIs also have got attention by the reformers (Teshome 2003). As a result, Ministry of Education (MoE) organizes the development of a curriculum by the respective departments and gives chances for stake holders to put their comments on it (FDRE 2009). All these efforts in any case attribute to ensure quality among HEIs in Ethiopia.

What is quality for Ethiopian higher education institutions? The concept of quality varies from one author to the other and from one nation to the other. It is highly depending on the philosophy and mission of the organization working for. Therefore, the concept of quality is amorphous (Carlson, 2000) that has different pictures for different people and organization. With this in mind, quality for the higher education system of Ethiopia is referred as fitting for purpose (FDRE 2009) that able to satisfy the expectations (to get innovative, change agent, problem solver and the like graduates) of the society. Though reforms have been made aggressively, the system of higher education in Ethiopia has problems particularly with reference to its quality dimension. For example, Daniel (2006:7) reported that

Opportunities for access of higher education have shown marked increase following the expansions of the government and private higher education institutions. On the other hand, there is equally valid and widely shared concern that the higher education expansion in the country appears primarily quantitative but serious quality problems are still there. There are serious challenges in meeting minimum standards for quality education. Providing adequate number of qualified staff, proper curricula, sufficient library, classroom facilities, etc. are some of the challenges that need to be successfully addressed quality in HEIs.

Ayalew et al (2010), moreover, remarked that in the Ethiopian public universities the teaching is more of teacher centred and the quality of the teaching learning practices are below the expected standard. As a result, though there are various variables that affect the quality of education, curriculum materials designing and delivering practices are the front variables. Teshome (2003) further contended that the curricula of higher education in Ethiopia, both at undergraduate and graduate programs, were in many cases judged as having large elements of irrelevance and weak delivery practices with respect to the current national and global development situations. Therefore, it seems crucially important to examine the structural framework of higher education curriculum and its actual classroom delivery (the teaching learning practices) thereby to see its implication for quality education,

and of course to show some alternatives. To this end, the following research questions have established.

1. How are the general frameworks of HEIs curricula formulated?
2. Are the designing and delivering practices of course materials in HEIs relevant to obtain quality education? How?

1.3 Objectives of the study

The general purpose of this study is to explore the procedures of curriculum designing and implementation in higher education institutions (HEIs) and its implication to quality higher education. To do so, the followings are the specific objectives of the study. The study examined the general frameworks of higher education curricula of Ethiopia and teachers practices about course materials (contents learning experiences and assessment strategies) selections and deliveries for bringing quality in education.

1.4 Significances of the Study

This study is going to support the businesses of higher education academia (teachers and students) in giving hints about the selection and delivery practices of their contents and learning experiences. It may assist teachers to take the freedom of selecting and delivering their curriculum experiences as an opportunity to maximize innovativeness in their teaching learning processes. As a result, the study helps to show that the process of deciding and then selecting curriculum experiences/materials are demanding tasks but very useful to make higher education teaching and learning practices to the expected standard (quality).

2. Methods

The main intent of this paper was to explore the procedures and practices of curriculum designing and delivery in Ethiopian HEIs by taking Bahir Dar University (BDU) as a focus. BDU, next to Addis Ababa University, is the second largest and oldest university in Ethiopia with 124 programs, more than 48, 000 students and around 1,400 teachers. The study utilized qualitative approach with case study design.

2.1. Data Sources and Research Settings

Data were secured through interviewing university teachers and students, and from personal reflections of the present researcher, who has taught more than 25 years in Bahir Dar University, too. Ten teachers ($Tr_1, Tr_2, Tr_3, \dots, Tr_{10}$), who have proper and relevant information about the problem under study, have identified purposively and considered as the main data sources. Teachers' exposures for curriculum development practices have given particular focus to point out respondent of the study. To complement the data from teachers, the article has carefully selected three students (St_1, St_2 and St_3) and participated in the interview.

2.2. Data Gathering Instruments and Procedures

Though the present researcher's reflection was taken, interview and observation were the main data collection instruments of this study.

Interview: was applied to search information about the nature of curriculum development in the university starting from the very establishment of the university (as a system) to specific facts/principles in a topic of a course. Seven interview guide items were developed and utilized to initiate the interview sessions of the study. All the interview sessions have accomplished by the researcher. When the respondents were reluctant to respond or when they divert the direction of a question, attempts were made to persuade and lead them back to the topic in order to concentrate and obtain relevant information on the issue that was raised.

Observation: was conducted with twelve purposively selected classroom practices. As much as possible varied courses from different faculties have been considered to conduct the observation. Moreover, the experiences and qualifications of teachers have taken in to account. By doing so teachers with variety backgrounds (in experience, field of specialization and academic rank) were observed. Of the twelve classroom observations, 8 were with high experienced teachers (more than 10 years service) and 4 are with less experienced (less than 5 years service). In their academic rank, five are assistant professor and above and the remaining seven are lecturers. There were some five semi-structured observation scale items. But many observation data were included from the classroom practice though they are not indicated in the observation scale.

2.3. Data Analysis techniques

All the data were qualitative. Therefore, the analysis is followed narration of the interview as well as the observation data in line with the themes raised in the research questions. The technique of intra-case analysis of qualitative data has been employed.

3. Results

3.1 The Structure of Higher Education Curriculum Development in Ethiopia

An *educational* institution, be it a university, school or any kinds of training institutes, has to have sort of curriculum (Lattuca, 2006). Curriculum development/design, as one of the teacher respondents (Tr_4) reported, is a crucial practice for educational institutions. "Curriculum development encompasses all the engagements that extend from the establishment of a system (university), faculty and department to plan/think a lesson for a day"

(as Tr₇ directly reflected). All developing countries HEIs' curriculum is highly influenced with the models of the Western nations' curriculum (UK, USA and other European nations) (Lattuca 2006; Teshome 2003). The Ethiopian HEIs' curriculum therefore never escapes from this reality. It is highly influenced by the US higher education model (Saint 2004). In this regard, teacher respondents (for example, Tr₃ and Tr₁₀) forwarded that because the curriculum in our HEIs is highly influenced by westerns, it is attempted to adapt for our students' local experience when we design and deliver a lesson. Ministry of Education has (MoE) organized expertise across the universities to prepare locally adapted syllabi for the nation's HEIs.

3.2. System/program (university, Faculty and Department) Development

How certain systems and programs of higher education are emerged in Ethiopia? As it is forwarded by one of the teacher interviewees, Tr₄, (who was a curriculum committee member once up on a time), MoE, with a deal to the prime minister office and other concerned minister offices, has responsible to show the needs for opening a university in certain areas of the nation. Once the idea is accepted and recognized by the concerned government authorities, the process of establishing a university, with its entire physical and curricular matters establishment, is accomplished by MoE. In other words, according to the responses of most of the teacher respondents (Tr₁, Tr₃, Tr₈, Tr₉), curricular issues are critically important not only in the case of course and lesson developments but also important while the universities, faculties and departments are established. That is, it is mandatory to think the nature of field of studies/disciplines which are going to install in the universities, faculties and departments when they are inaugurated. This is purely curricular issues (Tr₂ and Tr₈) that have to be entertained while universities, faculties and departments are established. For example, if 'X' university is established, there is a need to indicate or identify the kind of faculties/colleges (medical, agriculture or what) that it encompasses. This can be taken as a soft engineering side of the university system establishment.

Additions and reductions of programs (faculties, schools, institutions, etc) within the university, according to teachers' interview (Tr₁ and Tr₅) and my own experience as university staff, is normally done within the scope of the university. In order to accomplish this task, the university first engages in visibility studies to see how much the program is workable for the society as well as for the prospective learners of the program. For example, I was involved as a leader of visibility study group to open Medical Science Faculty in Bahir Dar University. In our study, we have talked with ministry of health and ministry of education (to understand societal needs through them), with medical science experts (to understand the expertise interest and to know the need of the subject matter) and with preparatory students (to see learners' need to wards the prospective faculty). In addition, the team identified the economic and institutional visibility from different stakeholders. By doing so, if the visibility studies of the intended programs/faculties are positive, the programs will be established in the university. If not the program is not realized or opened. Though the university has major responsibility to open or close the facilities, based on the result of the visibility studies, it is mandatory to inform and get the consent of Ministry of Education which is authorized to allocate more budgets for the faculty to be opened (Tr₈, who was an academic vice president before).

Opening a department within a faculty/program/ as explained by one of my teacher respondents, is possible by the faculty itself. Here, the faculty members are responsible to study the visibility of the department to open. Of course, the university has to acknowledge the opening of that department through its Academic Vice President and Curriculum Committee. And, the university is planned to adjust the budget in accordance with the demand and need of the newly opened department. Departments in turn have various courses in order to maintain the training to the required standards for that department. The department staffs are responsible to revise and update the nature, kinds and numbers of the courses in their department. That is, the staffs suggest possible amendments and changes to improve the nature of courses in accordance with the current scientific findings and knowledge. Then after, the department reports the kinds of amendments in the courses for the faculty with justifications. The faculty in turn informs this change for the university.

The first three top components of HEIs (university, faculty and department/program) need more of governmental bodies' interference and decision by exploring the general contexts of the nation as well as the local region. Of course, the question of what to teach (or what kinds of disciplines are incorporated) in the universities, faculties and departments should be among the top critical questions that need proper responses from proper expertise. In other words, MoE, in addition to other concerns related to the physical plants (buildings, furniture, and staffs' employment), needs to worry about the kinds of trainings which are going to offer in the new emerging university. And the university in turn has to think the kinds and natures of disciplines/departments that will be incorporated in each faculty. That is why this article is claimed the establishment processes of universities, faculties and departments are as part of the curricular issues.

3.3. Development of Courses and Lessons

Though there are supports from the faculty as well as from the university, the course frameworks for the department are done with field specialists' discussions (Tr₄ and Tr₆). If this practice (course development) is sometimes accomplished at the nation level (in its widest scale), MoE might be taken the responsibility to

coordinate course developments for various departments by calling expertise from different universities in the form of workshops or some other forms of forums. In this regard, Teshome (2003:8), who was the late state Minister for Higher Education of Ethiopia, stated that

Emphasis is given to the urgent need to revise and adapt the curricula to meet national, social, economic, cultural and geographical circumstances. Each department prepared a curriculum and this was evaluated by relevant stakeholders. Previously, each university department was copying and adapting curricula for different programs from relevant countries, adjusted as per the policy provisions (duration, practical orientation, etc.). The documents from each institution were collected and universities with similar programs were required to look into the curricula of each other and make necessary adjustments and amendments. This final document is to be used as the basic document for a given curriculum, but each university is then expected to adjust as per its situations and circumstances.

Therefore, course syllabi of various departments are prepared and sent to the respective institutions. The course syllabi mostly include some major topical descriptions and unit organizations. University syllabi in Ethiopia, with the inputs from group of expertise under the auspices of MoE, are developed with general objectives and contents for the course (Tr10 and Tr3). That is to mean, as one of the teacher respondents (Tr2) explained, “in the case of the university, the course teacher is responsible to select and organize the detail contents (facts, rules, principles, theories, etc) and learning experiences (class activities, exercises, examples, assignments, projects etc) which, I believe, are proper and fit to the goals of the university education in general and the objectives of a given course in particular.” To conclude, the development of curricula in HEIs of Ethiopia has different degree of involvement for teachers. When the curriculum development trend of Ethiopian HEIs examines, the engagement of teachers declined from lesson to system (university) level. Their engagement in the lesson development and delivery, on the other hand, is huge and non substitutable to realize quality higher education from the process-put perspective. In some cases, however, (from the discourse of the interview and my observation) I realized that course materials are designed in a closed-ended manner which is less attractive for students’ engagement, innovativeness and problem solving capacities: some of the main quality agendas of HEIs of Ethiopia.

3.4. Teachers’ Classroom Practice and Its implications for Quality Education

The assumption behind the responsibility and freedom given for the HEIs academia, during their teaching learning practices, is that to facilitate their engagements in knowledge searching and construction with minimal restriction and boundary. “On the way to select and implement detail scientific contents for a course, the university community, particularly teachers and students might be moved beyond what is prescribed in the syllabi, which only contain general objectives and major lesson topics” (Tr 5). This is considered as a legitimate and well accepted practice because university education is expecting to work for innovation in science and then to cope with the near coming world (Hussey and Smith, 2010). Here, in the case of selecting, organizing and implementing detail contents and learning experiences, the teacher is responsible to see his/her selection and implementation practices in line with students’ need. As teacher respondents mentioned (Tr1, Tr7 and Tr10), when the teacher designs and delivers a lesson, at least she has to look about her students’ need (gap) for that specific topic, state possible objectives, select and implement curriculum experiences parallel with the identified needs and objectives. However, one of the student interviewees (St2) reported that though there are many teachers who have good selection and delivery practices of curriculum materials, significant number of teachers miss-used this opportunity. Another student (St1) said that “among the problems observed, there are teachers who used their previous exercise book to teach courses in the university”. This shows that they do not pay attention for updating their lesson designing. If this is the case, the university is not in a position to realize its mission (being dynamic and change agents for the surrounding community) assigned by the respective society (Clark, 1983). This, in other words, suffers the issue of quality in HEIs of Ethiopia.

Teacher respondents on their side forwarded that being autonomous in lesson designing and delivery seems difficult for less experienced and qualified teachers. This is because engaging in actual teaching practice is the most useful experience to be a good teacher. Tr7 extended this idea in explaining how much you will be comfortable to handle courses that you teach two/three times. Therefore, well experienced and qualified teachers are in a good position to manage the assignments of content and learning experiences designing. Another interviewee, Tr8, informed that if the course, for example, is offered by two different instructors, there are significance differences in instructional processes and learning outcomes which are really decisive indicators of quality education. The other worst condition is that, in the name of academic freedom, no one says anything about the instructional performances of teachers in the university. According to Tr5, “those novice teachers; though they are graduating from the university that they teach together with their previous instructors, are not open and ready to get advises and experiences.” They rather prefer to refer their incomplete materials and little experiences in order to offer their teaching (Tr1 and Tr3). So that though there are significant number of teachers

who work for quality in their teaching process by initiating students for understanding and creativity, some teachers are delivering the courses in sub-standard manner (Tr4).

Students have a similar concern in this regard. One of the student respondents (St1) explained that the centre of quality is our behavioural change as a result of the training we have got. This will be realized through teachers' effort for adapting the solid curriculum to our previous and local experiences through various activities and examples rather than translating what is found somewhere in the handouts and books (St3). Another student interviewee reported that teacher's course preparation and delivery varies from individual to individual which in turn calls variation in our learning performances/outcomes. This is a critical indicator for ensuring quality of education in any education level including universities (Carlson, 2000). For example, in our class, some course delivery accomplishments leave the classroom without reaching consensus towards the relative truth for today. Even to the extent, I saw few teachers who lack explanations for the divergent discussions raised in the class therefore we conceive different things (St2).

Observation data of the study realizes almost a similar fact with the interview data. That is, there are some teachers, particularly experienced teachers, who accomplished the teaching learning processes with open-ended, flexible and informative actions. It is to mean, instead of strictly focusing their lecture notes (without satisfactory examples, evidences, explanations and discussions), in some classes I observed sufficient explanations for the activities, which seem suddenly emerged and class made. On the contrary, in some other classes the observation showed that the classroom practice is totally followed the fidelity perspective of classroom implementation. The practice seems to implement contents and learning experiences which are designed and planned by somebody else. To the extent, my observation realized that sometimes there are bold confusions which are appearing while the teaching learning practices going on. This possibly leads both students and the teacher towards hopelessness. It is really damaging for the learning practices that need courage and hope (Hussey and Smith, 2010). I have also learnt that there are few teachers who are inconvenient for students that raised discussion initiative questions. From the context of my observation, I understood that there is a clear demarcation between teachers who are preparing very well and who are not. Teachers, who prepare well, are delivering the lesson and handling the classroom in confidence and relaxed mood so that they generated very constructing and welcoming ideas for the class, which seem valuable to ensure quality in higher education. But teachers with less preparation seem in hurry and instable mood. Some of them seem that they are teaching because of some external imposition/force which in turn affects the process-put stages of quality education.

4. Summary

The study examined the procedures of curriculum materials development and implementation practices in HEIs of Ethiopia and its implication to quality education, of course, by exploring the delivery practices, which can be taken as the process-put aspects of quality. The study attempted to realize the structural frameworks of HEIS in Ethiopia have two clear features. (1) Top level HEIs curriculum is based on policy decisions by different bodies of the government. This is common particularly for the curricular arrangements above the level of the courses, for example, in deciding field of studies of a newly opened university, program and faculty. (2) Ground level HEIs curriculum is handled through Practitioners' (teachers) direct participation. This level includes designing and implementation of courses, units, sub-units, specific contents, learning experiences and assessment techniques.

Teachers' curriculum materials designing and delivery practices are varying depending on their commitment and experience levels. For example, most teachers who have better experience, qualification and research engagement seem good in their designing, implementation and overall handling of curriculum materials in the courses and lessons which are actually fundamental practices for the availability of quality education throughout the system. Some teachers with minimal experiences in research and teaching, on the other hand, lack commitment and readiness to play the role of fostering true learning engagements for their learners as well as for themselves which is considered as the main threats to actualize quality in higher education of the nation, Ethiopia.

5. Conclusions and Reflections

Because it has significant implications for the nation's budget, decisions about the establishment of institution (university), faculty and program/department are the responsibility of governmental bodies through analyzing the economic and socio-political scenario of the nation/region. The soft-engineering (the curriculum) side of the universities, faculties and departments mainly worked out by the respective professionals. Both student and teacher respondents agreed that the establishment of the physical infrastructure of HEIs by itself is nothing unless it is filled with relevant and proper curriculum (soft ware) designing and delivery. The courses in the department and the detail curriculum experiences (contents and learning experiences) in the course, which are critically important to ensure the life of the whole system of the HEIs, are mainly left for teachers. They are

assumed as excellent academia and researchers with plenty of resources and library facilities, however, this article found variations among HEI teachers' performance.

This is because the assumed academic freedom serves as a shelter for some teachers to cover what they are doing in relation to their content selections and delivery practices. As a result, they seem to manage the teaching practice depending only to their own minimal scope and experience without consulting more material as well as human resources, even to the extent they are consulting their own experiences in less involved and shallow manner.

To conclude, this article has shown that, on one hand, there are university teachers who enjoy the opportunities (being authoritative in lesson designing and delivering) thereby to use it as a valuable input for their teaching learning practices and then to realize quality in higher education. On the other hand, there are teachers who take this opportunity as a burden for them because it demands more reading and consulting of related materials (or human resources) of the course. And, therefore, they are not ready for doing persistently in accordance, that is, to develop and encourage deep thought, reflective behaviour and innovativeness among their university students. However, it is advisable that university teachers have to understand not to use the given academic freedom as a shelter to deliver courses in sub-standard manner rather to deliver courses beyond the available guides in the syllabi which are sent from elsewhere. This tells that university teachers need to exert more efforts with in depth thought, analysis and experience sharing in order to do their assignments, university teaching, to the expected standard of quality and sometimes beyond.

The HEIs on their side should not take their teachers excellence academic performance (which usually expresses in their graduation GPA) as a guarantee (an end) to accomplish teaching, which is complex in nature. Rather, the institutions have to recognize all university teachers in general and less-experienced (in teaching and research) teachers in particular need to support from the respective department senior staffs and of course from other continuous professional development (CPD) programs including higher diploma program (HDP) for higher education teachers. Moreover, HEIs shall to encourage at least shared (group) lesson (contents, learning experiences and assessment techniques) designing and at most team teaching /course delivery/. The application of friendly/polite instruction-based supervision, by senior and model professors of the field, might be useful and supportive, particularly for newly employed teachers.

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