



## **ENHANCING QUALITY IN CURRICULUM AND LEARNING OUTCOMES: RESPECT TO PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT**

### **Shiferaw Teror Bersso**

*P G Coordinator, College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, Bule Hora University, Adola, Oramia, Ethiopia, shifetirore2012@gmail.com*

### **Taye Mosisa Gameda**

*Head Department of Educational Planning and Management College of Education and Behavioral Sciences Bule Hora University, Adola, Oramia, Ethiopia  
tayexmose@gmail.com*

### **Tegene Hatamu Kebede**

*Head Department of Curriculum and Instructions College of Education and Behavioral Sciences Bule Hora University, Adola, Oramia, Ethiopia tegeneh@gmail.com*

### **Dr. Oprakash H M**

*Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instructions College of Education and Behavioural Sciences Bule Hora University, Adola, Oramia, Ethiopia  
dr.omprakash322017@gmail.com*

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#### **Abstract**

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*Quality in education has become the prime concern of countries the world over. Quality is the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful execution. Total quality management in education is a universal compulsion. In Ethiopia, promoting quality has been the focus of almost all the committees constituted at different stages of development of Ethiopian Education system. Enhancement of quality is an institutional effort and is not merely an outcome of an individual's conviction. There should be a participatory and consultative decision-making to implement quality enhancement strategies. Prospective teachers are to be equipped with mental / intellectual abilities that enable them to refine thoughts, to reason and to judge. Present secondary school curriculum should be redesigned to enable the students in developing thinking ability. Goals should suit the contemporary as well as the larger needs of society. The attention of schools should focus on the right priorities and responsibilities especially with reference to teaching and learning. Improvement of teaching methods using educational technology, projects, providing computer skills and thinking skills, encouragement of co-curricular activities and incorporation of community orientation are to be observed. Life skills should be taught along with the regular lessons. Human resource development should be taken care off. Cooperation among the staff, management, students, heads of institutions are very important. An aura of healthy competition builds up wherever there is a healthy, mutually encouraging, congenial atmosphere. Improvement of teaching methods using educational technology, projects, providing computer skills and thinking skills, encouragement of co-curricular activities and incorporation of community orientation are to be observed if quality is to be enhanced.*



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## **Introduction:**

The present day world is highly competitive characterized by information explosion and an ever-increasing demand for awareness of improving one's faculties. Higher Education becoming an international service, there is a growing concern the world over for quality, standards and recognition. Consequent to this trend, total quality management in education is emerging as a universal compulsion and this has led to discussion on the application of some of the management concept of the education sector. Among the various points of interest the debate on how bench marks are to be evolved for ensuring and assuring quality at different levels finds different significant place.

Education is one of the potential instruments in the developmental process, if it is properly geared for that purpose. Since Education is an important component of the social system should contribute in the solution of the problems by developing desirable understanding, skills, abilities and attitudes. Today the world is facing three major problems- population, pollution and poverty. Although Science and Technology have improved, the lot of large number of human beings some of the worst problems of humanity such as mentioned above have been brought about or aggravated by Science and Technology.

The current developmental scenario throughout the world standing at the threshold of 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the third Millennium presents a very alarming picture. On the one hand planning is a foot for a better global economic and social order and on the other hand numerous hardcore problems created by humankind are to be overcome. Education without values and ethics can prove to be morbid. The contemporary scenario of Ethiopia compels everyone to turn to education as the central key to the road of regeneration. Unfortunately, our education is at the crossroads. There is every need to end „thoughtless“ education and make the actual classroom setting a lively and active place where in the students feel free to think and contribute to the learning process.

In Ethiopia, promoting quality has been the focus of almost all the committees constituted at different stages of the development of Ethiopian Education system. Among the various consultations, discussions and recommendations made that gave a direction and focus to our developmental strategies is the Policy on Education.

A careful observation of our educational system shows that education as a social system has been the subject of constant change, however slow the process of change might be. As institutions established by society the educational institution has an influence on certain aspects of society. At an ideological level, all educational institutions implement change. But at the practical plane, only a few institutions are successful in reaching the aspired level of efficiency. Education which is intimately connected with human resource development has to consider the ramifications of the emerging challenges and develop the educational programmes which are both responsive and comprehensive-covering all aspects of education.

Prospective teachers are taught methodology without the rationale behind it. There is every need to equip teachers with the know-how of different issues. Students require essential mental techniques or intellectual abilities that enable them to formulate and refine thoughts, to reason about and to judge. The students should be given opportunities to participate. Our present secondary school curriculum does not provide scope for enhancing divergent thinking and independent thinking amongst students. The curriculum should lend itself for divergent ways of thinking and doing things. Students are made to learn the ready-made answers to the questions which are asked at the end of the lesson. They are considered to be perfect if they are able to answer all the questions. This kind of “Spoon-feeding” reduces the alertness and thinking of students. If a tricky question/an off-beat question or an unusual question is put to them they are unable to answer. Answering questions on their own is difficult for them because lack of fluency of language and independent thinking. Freedom of thought and expression are to be provided for students in the classroom. There is every need to modify or redesign the curriculum in such a way that it makes students become capable of thinking independently. The teacher should be made to provide opportunities for thinking. The curriculum should identify a list of skills that teachers must embed with in all learning areas – information processing, reasoning, inquiry, creativity and evaluation. The curriculum should be activity-based and it should try to develop independent and free thinking among students.

Efforts should be made to have consultations to revise the goals to suit the contemporary as well the larger needs of the society. With in the prescribed structure institutions could attempt many innovative strategies on their own. There should be an increase in program options like introducing need-based programs. The growing demand from students should be fulfilled.

Life skills are being taught in separate classes along with the regular lessons. This makes the students feel that life skills are separate and that they are not a part of the prescribed syllabus. Separate sessions are set aside to teach life skills in many of the studies. This creates an impression in the minds of pupils that it has its own separate role to play and that it is not infused in the lessons. There is every need to restructure the existing curriculum. Institutions have to find innovations in curricula and offer additional programs of their restructured curriculum. One should understand that, effective ways of doing revision of curriculum as an ongoing process instead of routine work to be undertaken. The attention of schools should focus on the right priorities and responsibilities especially with reference to teaching and learning as their primary mission. A positive stimulus needs to be given to institutional attention and orient them to improve their quality of teaching–learning by going beyond the routine examination-oriented outcome. The fact that teaching–learning has to be important as research or even more so should be well understood by all. Improvement of teaching methods using educational technology, projects, providing computer skills and thinking skills, encouragement of co-curricular activities and incorporation of community orientation are to be observed. There should be a greater improvement in student support services like open access and extended working hours of the library, getting latest books, establishing inter-library linkage, centralized computer centre and an easy access to it, guidance and counseling and financial assistance. Student activities should be channelized towards skill development and leadership training. There should be an improvement in the computer facilities. Human resource development should be taken care of, training the staff in new communication technologies and student activities should gain a new thrust. These are useful investments for the human resource development of the institution according to good planning and management.

Enhancement of quality is an institutional effort and is not merely an outcome of an individual's conviction. There should be a participatory and consultative decision –making to implement quality enhancement strategies and cooperation among the staff, management, students, heads of institutions are very important.

Schools which functioned like islands within the bigger system should share their experiences and expertise. They should know the achievements and good practices of one another. Healthy competition among students, teachers and institutions should be initialized. Many of the things taken for granted should be re-discovered as their unique characteristics

and strengths. Interaction with peers and employees to strengthen the rediscovered potential, linkage with other institutions and industry to capitalize on potentials, collecting feedback from students for improving their educational experiences and consultations with peers to overcome the weak links should be initialized. Increase in healthy practices results in the enhancement of quality. An aura of healthy competition builds up wherever there is a healthy, mutually encouraging, congenial atmosphere.

There should be an increase in the community-oriented activities and the participation of students and faculty in those activities. Extending expertise to the development of the immediate neighbourhood and initializing research that would solve the problems of the community is an essential factor. There should be a change from a closed climate of functioning towards a participative, open and transparent style of management.

Research work should be undertaken by teachers in order to improve the existing ways of teaching, bring in an element of novelty and catering to the needs of students and the findings of research are to be shared by others.

Many of the countries have recognized the need for introducing thinking skills in the curriculum of schools. The Revised Curriculum of Northern Ireland includes five broad strands – managing information;

1. Thinking, problem-solving,
2. Decision-making;
3. Being creative;
4. Working with others and
5. Self-management.

Curriculum bodies in Scotland and Wales are involved in similar activities. Today, most educational institutions throughout the world have recognized that mastery of content knowledge alone, however excellently taught, is not sufficient to meet the demands of the knowledge economy. In today's knowledge economy, information is expanding at such a rate that it is impossible for students to acquire and store sufficient knowledge in their memories for future use. Students require transferable skills to allow them to manage different problems in different circumstances at different times throughout their lives.

The complexity of modern jobs also calls for the ability to incorporate information from multiple sources, determine its veracity and make judgments with the view of generating new knowledge or processes. Hence, it is essential to develop students who are

capable of making good decisions and adept at higher order thinking. Thinking is the crown jewel of cognition. It is spectacularly brilliant in some people, even sublime among the average and the fact that it can happen at all is one of the greatest wonders of human species. Learning how to think, is what education is all about. As teachers, we have the crucial task of helping our children understand how to think effectively and show them how best they can use their amusing brain. Learning how to think and to think properly is a very exciting process for which the sky is the limit.

To teach or to learn thinking there should be a thinking classroom which stimulates thinking. Because of lack of time and support, many teachers think they can teach thinking by occasionally assigning a “complex- thinking worksheet” or conducting a “thought-provoking” discussion with their students. Yet, although complex thinking is supposedly occurring, it is sporadic and undirected. A classroom of thinkers can be created only through systematic reflection and planning. Fortunately, in many instances it is possible to integrate the teaching of thinking skills directly into the subjects that are taught. The thinking classroom should see that the quality of learning of students depends on how well students think about their work. Students who think about their strengths and weaknesses will develop deeper understanding of subjects across the curriculum than those students who do not. A thoughtful and reflective atmosphere should prevail in the thinking classroom. In the twenty-first century curriculum is constructed to help schools focus on the values and purposes of education, curriculum planning, critical content, pedagogy and assessment. It describes the deep understandings that students need to develop now and draw upon in the future as active, responsible citizens and lifelong learners. The field of Education is dynamic, evolving and extending in response to the context in which it operates. The advent of new forms of multimedia and communication technologies has heralded new literacies and different ways of communicating and thinking. If we look at what actually goes on in our school and college classrooms, libraries, laboratories and lecture halls it is reasonable to conclude that the major goal of education is to develop in students a command of substantive knowledge.

Cognitive learning and cognitive excellence are overemphasized in Education with consequent neglect of the affective determiners of behaviour. The educational system is preoccupied with what their students know; and students are most concerned with what they like or dislike and how they feel. Furthermore, the most profound challenges in our society are not cognitive. Social unity, social righteousness, ethical standards and moral values,

courage and compassion are the affective determiners of the individual. These viewpoints are right because feeling is as real and as important as a part of human nature as is getting to know. How we feel is almost always more important to us than what we know, and how we behave is a paramount concern for those with whom we share our lives, and since behaviour is determined by what we know, clearly the affective dimension will play a more significant role in meeting the challenges of society. Many affective goals can be reached, at least in part, through cognitive means and many cognitive goals can be reached when the affective dimension is strengthened. The affective failure of the students can nearly always be traced to some prior cognitive failures. The cognitive failure of the students can also be traced to some prior affective failures. Affective side effects cannot be ignored to promote cognitive learning. In fact, the affective disposition to learn must be considered by teachers in accessing the behaviour of the students for each instructional unit. Techniques which make students develop a sense of importance and a sense of responsibility by involvement in classroom interaction are to be used to help students develop a deeper perspective of the subject.

The conventional way of teaching in the present day secondary schools, help in realisation of objectives of teaching the basic skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. But there is a lacuna as far as the finer aspects of language like expression, appreciation, sense of priority are concerned. Innovative practices with new trends of teaching and novel approaches to teaching should be utilized in order to break the monotony and introduce an element of freshness in the teaching-learning process.

The findings of the research – new methodologies, novel ways of doing things should reach down to the level of common masses and should be utilized by them. The quest for knowledge, the zeal to adopt new things and inquisitiveness should be made a part of the personality of students. The general atmosphere in the classroom should be made very active, participatory and students should not feel either hesitant or inhibited while expressing their opinions, thoughts, imagination and feelings. Everyone in the class should be made to contribute by way of adding comments, sharing thoughts and exchanging views. Senior, meritorious students should be involved in teaching activities and in guiding students. They should be made a source of inspiration for the juniors. The present examination system predominantly tries to test the writing skill of students. But a student may be good at writing and he may not be good at the other skills. Due emphasis on speaking, reading and listening should be given in the examination system. Examination system should try to test “beyond

performance to potential.”Quality of education will be improved if teaching is improved. The most important input or investment for an educational institution is its teachers. Emphasis on qualification and caliber of teachers needs to be given immediate attention. The most skilled a teacher is the better will be his teaching and the use of different strategies. The teacher needs to assess himself objectively for better results. Without education and knowledge of modern teaching techniques teachers would become incomplete. Re-engineering teacher architects is the need of the hour. Skilled and dedicated teachers are required to master the new approaches and techniques. They should dedicate themselves to the cause of education. Teachers should aim at preparing the student for active and responsible participation in society. They should equip the students with coping skills. Teacher should possess essential characteristic of a competent and committed teacher. He should be loveable and modest and should be aware of impact of knowledge explosion. The teachers are not only disseminators of knowledge but also motivators, as well as good planner, good manager, mediators and facilitators of learning. It is the responsibility of teacher training colleges to prepare pupil-teachers to meet the emerging needs of modern times.

**Conclusion:**

On great many occasions, people possess resistance in breaking the barrier of avoiding the beaten track and opting for novel, innovative ways. Hence, it is essential to develop students who are capable of making good decisions and adept at higher order thinking. Therefore, it is necessary to include development of thinking and practice in using both sets of competencies to solve problems and make decisions in a wide variety of situations. In today's rapidly changing context, it is solving real problems and making correct decisions that is valued, not simply demonstrating a narrow set of skills in a highly structured academic setting.

The main aim of education is to unsettle the minds of the young, make them enlightened and inflame their intellect. Today, better quality and better service are essential, but they are not enough. The motivation for writing the present article came from the belief that it is the teaching program that makes the difference in the class room. A resourceful program, a “thinking classroom”, can make the subject taught – a vehicle for inculcation of proper feeling and thinking pattern which in turn builds up a strong nation. Creativity and innovation are the only engines that will drive lasting and global success.



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