

# Teacher Training Syllabus Review Process

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### Abstract

*This article describes what a syllabus is and outlines its characteristics. It briefly covers the teacher training curriculum of which the syllabus is an accompanying document. Further, the article looks at the principles for reviewing the college curriculum and the teacher training or education syllabuses. The elements to consider when revising the teaching syllabus are also outlined. What is involved in developing a scope and sequence chart for use in reviewing the instructional syllabus is stated. The values of the scope and sequence chart are also described. An illustration of the scope and sequence chart based on a subject called, Environmental Studies, is given. An exposition follows on the sequencing of content and learning experiences for influencing student teachers. Finally, the article deals with the monitoring system for ensuring efficacy of the instructional syllabus.*

### Introduction

A syllabus is described as a concise written outline of a course of study. It is a curriculum document which outlines topics or concepts to be covered in a particular subject. Thompson and

his associates (1977) proposed that a good syllabus must have aims and objectives which determine the content of the syllabus. The content should be clearly linked with such aims and objectives and should be logically organized. A syllabus should indicate method of teaching (e.g. two lecture hours per week and one tutorial hour per week). Also, it should include prescribed and recommended readings and staffing should be incorporated in it. A good syllabus must be related to the age and aptitudes of the students for whom it is designed. Many syllabuses fail to lead to effective teaching and learning because their material is not related to the points just mentioned. A good syllabus must be sufficiently flexible to be used effectively by the lecturers and student teachers of different abilities and interests. Finally, a good syllabus should enable learning to take place.

## **Development and Implementation Period for the College Programme**

Having developed the teacher training curriculum which is consistent with the educational policy and which comprises teacher competences, areas of study or learning, aims, introduction, structure or framework and admission requirements, and evaluation procedures and soon, we should have implemented it for five or so years before reviewing it.

When it is time to revise the curriculum and its accompanying syllabuses we should take into account the following principles:

1. **Assessment of Needs:**

We should carry out a situation analysis which would enable us derive the rationale for our instructional syllabuses. The situational analysis would assist us determine needs and goals for the nation and students.

2. **Topics base on areas of learning**

We should write a statement of what each topic intends to accomplish. Topics and competences or goals would then be derived. What must students know and do to accomplish goals?

3. **Learner Characteristics**

Here, we need to take into account the learner's age, capabilities, interests, attitudes and values.

4. **Content**

We should list or consider items of subject content. Task analysis should be done and a scope and sequence should be carried out in order to indicate how the content should be organized and sequenced. Subject content items should be related to stated goals.

5. **Learning Outcomes**

These should be stated indicating what a student teacher should be able to do after completing a unit of instruction. Learning outcomes should be well sequenced and organized so that advanced ones receive appropriate attention. Also, levels of objectives should be considered in terms of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains.

6. **Learning Experiences**

The learning activities should be selected based on the content and for the purpose of achieving the goals.

7. **Resources**

Teaching and learning materials should be suggested in the syllabus in order to help the lecturer in planning and conducting learning activities, and also in motivating and attracting the student teachers' interests.

8. **Support Services**

Here, we should specify the requirements for implementing the syllabus such as equipment, library, staff, etc. Instructional strategies should be considered as well.

9. **Evaluation**

Evaluation devices should be suggested in the syllabus in order to determine whether goals are being achieved.

## 10. **Pre-testing**

This principle entails the determination of skills, knowledge, attitudes and values already mastered by the student teachers in order to be able to cope with the next topics or learning activities. At every stage of syllabus review, prerequisite knowledge should be provided for the students to have before tackling a new topic or learning activity. Competences students may already possess should be determined so that the design of new materials is properly done.

The revised instructional syllabus document should therefore include the following elements:

1. Rationale
2. Goals
3. Teaching/learning activities or experiences
4. Teaching/learning materials
5. Assessment procedures
6. Scope and sequence chart
7. Term by term sequence/year by year sequence
8. The instructional syllabus
9. Topics
10. Goals
11. Content
12. Teaching/learning experiences and the strategy of presentation
13. Teaching/learning materials
14. Assessment

## **Scope and Sequence Chart**

Let us now turn to what is involved in developing a scope and sequence chart as one of the elements of syllabus review. A scope and sequence chart is concerned with the arrangement of

content in terms of breadth both from a particular class level or year and from one class to the next. Such orderly arrangement of content is generally designed to facilitate teaching and learning.

The learning experiences and content are determined and prescribed for each class level on the basis of interests, needs and mental capacity of the student teachers to comprehend at that particular level of teacher education.

The following procedures should be followed when developing a scope and sequence chart:

1. Consider the breadth and depth of the subject
2. Determine the major topics or ideas or elements to be covered in the subject
3. Determine major concepts belonging to each topic
4. Arrange major concepts into a proper sequence using the following principles:
  - a. simple to complex
  - b. concrete to abstract
  - c. specific to general
  - d. practical to theoretical
  - e. facts to generalizations
5. Sequence the content appropriately within the class level or progression year.
6. Correlate concepts integrating across topics-consider prerequisites between topics and subjects
7. Consider horizontal correlation with related fields
8. Check for continuity, articulation, balance and integration.

### **Scope**

We should ask ourselves the following questions;

1. Have we selected the entire breadth of coverage of the subject?
2. Have we selected only the essential facts, concepts, themes, skills and values?
3. Are the topics selected relevant in terms of life and living of the students and in accordance with current research on the particular subject?

4. Are the topics selected significant, i.e. do they apply to a wide range of subject goals and learning experiences?

### **Sequencing the content**

We should ask ourselves these questions;

1. Are the topics arranged in an order, which facilitates teaching and learning?
2. Which piece of content is pre-requisite to which?
3. What learning experiences should precede which and when?
4. Are the various elements of the content to be taught and learned arranged in a meaningful order of difficulty from one level to the next?
5. Does the sequence take into account the mental capability of the students?

### **Continuity**

1. Is each topic developed further at each class or year level?
2. Is there a gradual development of each topic from one class or year to the next?
3. Are there any gaps in the progression of knowledge and understanding and skills?
4. Is there an acceptable rationale for any apparent lack of continuity?

### **Articulation**

1. Is there any connection between one topic and another?
2. Do theory and practice go together?
3. Do students experience content as a unit? (Content treated as a whole)
4. Does learning include both interpretation as well as application?
5. Does College learning relate to current life outside the College?

### **Balance**

1. Is there reasonable balance in terms of order in scope and sequence? (i.e. how much is quantity and depth?)

2. Is there a balance between breadth and depth of content and the amount of time available for coverage of material or content? (Content prescribed is sometimes too much for the available time)
3. Is there a reasonable balance on the time allocated for each subject in the curriculum?

### **Integration**

1. Does scope and sequence take into account the fact that learning is more effective when content from one subject is related meaningfully to content in another subject in the curriculum?
2. Are contents, themes, ideas and facts interrelated?

### **Values of the Scope and Sequence Chart**

The objective of a scope and sequence chart is to help the lecturer with the following:

1. Preparation of an instructional syllabus or scheme of work which is based on an orderly arrangement of the topics and content which has its basis on the principles of teaching and learning.
2. A sequential arrangement of the topics for the purpose of learning and teaching and the mental development of the students.
3. A clear statement of the content to be covered in each topic at different years of teacher education.
4. Determination of which topics are an essential prerequisite to which topics.
5. Ensuring that there is continuity of topic and content between any three years of training.
6. Ensuring that there is articulation of content and learning experiences within and between topics at a particular year level and also between and among class levels or year levels
7. Ensuring that there is a reasonable balance between breadth and depth of content between and among class or year levels.

Please note that a scope and sequence chart derives its topics or strands from the goals of teaching that particular subject. Therefore, in order to develop a scope and sequence chart it is necessary to examine the goals of the subject.

\* An illustration of a scope and sequence chart on Environmental Studies is as follows:

<b>Strand</b>	<b>Basic Human needs</b>	<b>Health and Safety</b>	<b>Our home and family</b>	<b>Our environment</b>
I	The food  The home  The clothes	Eating good food  keeping our bodies clean  Keeping our clothes clean	Finding and storing food  keeping our home clean  Purchasing clothes for the family	Growing good crops  keeping our surroundings clean  Mending Clothes
II	Why we eat food  Types of homes  Importance of clothes	Keeping our teeth clean  Keeping homes tidy Modes of storing clothes	Ways of preparing food  Home maintenance Extended family values versus Nuclear family values	Farming methods and land usage  Landscaping Environmental pollution and its consequences

The real strength of a Teacher Training programme lies in how the syllabus is devised and renovated. The key is in the word syllabus.



In a syllabus, student teachers receive a carefully considered sequence of experiences designed to influence them at teachable moments. Pre-requisites mean something and student teachers are held accountable for minimum levels of achievement before going on to advanced levels or goals.

Sequencing and ordering of instructional materials for student teachers is our primary focus in syllabus review. As we do so, we take into account what items we have already identified; which competences, objectives and activities we want to include in a syllabus.

It is proposed that an ordered choice of experiences for student teachers be given around Fuller's concern model for purposes of illustration. Fuller (1969) in work done at the Research and Development Centre for Teacher Education in Texas noted that there is an ordered sequence of concerns that most professional teachers pass through. A modification of this order is as follows:

**Phase I: Concerns about Self**

Level 0 ó concerns unrelated to teaching

Level 1 ó Concerns about self as a teacher

**Phase II: Concerns about Task**

Level 2 ó How adequate am I?

Level 3 ó How do my pupils feel about me?

**Phase III: Concerns about Task**

Level 4 ó Are they learning what I'm teaching?

Level 5 ó Are they learning what they need?

Level 6 ó How can I improve as a teacher?

According to Fuller, these concerns are developmental. For instance, most teachers will not be concerned with impact questions until they have dealt with self and task concerns effectively.

What would a teacher education syllabus look like if it were modelled after Fuller's concerns theory? First and foremost, a careful study would be made of the concerns of beginning student

teachers. Careful consideration would also be made of the order of attaining competences. The ideal, of course, would be to allow student teachers to acquire the skills and competences they were concerned about or those that would help them alleviate their concerns when they needed to.

For example, the teaching skill of questioning, particularly the use of probing questions, is one of those special few competences identified by Rosenshine (1971) as being a skill demonstrated by effective teachers. The use of probing questions must obviously be preceded by knowledge of what a probing question is, in keeping with the sequencing alluded to.

However, the question remains, when should a student teacher be expected to acquire these skills so that they will be of maximum benefit? Obviously almost anybody could be trained to identify probing questions in a relatively short period of time. Asking the questions might be a slightly more difficult skill. What does the Fuller model imply for the prescription of learning this skill? The student teacher who is still at Level 3 of the Fuller model (‘How do my pupils feel about me?’) would be most hesitant to use probing questions in a teaching situation. By asking probing questions he/she is placing his/her pupils in a position of possible embarrassment and awkwardness, of not knowing the answer. As a result, many student teachers would rather answer their own questions.

Another example of the Phase II concern with respect to teacher skills is classroom management. A student teacher who is interested in being liked by pupils would find it difficult to enforce classroom management rules. This skill normally happens late in a teacher education syllabus. The skill of classroom management occurs when the student teacher becomes concerned with his or her impact on pupils.

As for the monitoring system for the syllabus, we have to evaluate all its major components such as goals, content, pre-test, teaching/learning activities, resources and support services in order to determine if there are any weaknesses in the instructional syllabus so that revisions are done to improve it. During the implementation stage of the syllabus, formative evaluation of every aspect of it is carried out. And after the implementation of the syllabus, summative evaluation is done. The results of which are fed back in the instructional syllabus to sharpen it further. In this case, the student teacher serves as the primary resource for evaluating the syllabus. An analysis

of his or her results of tests and other evaluation measures, as well as direct observations, made while the student teacher works, can indicate deficiencies in the learning sequence and the need for corrections. For example, the instructional pace may be too fast or too slow, or the student teacher may find a sequence uninteresting, confusing, or too difficult.

This phase of evaluation also permits the lecturer to determine if, at any point in the instructional sequence, too much previous student knowledge has been assumed or if the emphasis is on material that the student teacher already knows, therefore not requiring a high level of attention. Because of these possibilities, one or more try out phases of teaching and learning should be made before a syllabus is actually utilized. A syllabus should be tested on a representative sample of the student group under what will be normal conditions. The information obtained, known as feedback, from the evaluation of this pilot test may indicate that one or more revisions in the syllabus should be made before it is used with the whole student group.

The procedure of trial testing and revision is important to the success of the syllabus. It should relate not only to the suitability of goals, subject content, learning methods, and materials, but also to the roles of lecturers, the use of facilities and equipment, timetables, and other factors that all together affect the optimum performance for the achievement of goals.

There are times when a new syllabus must be implemented without testing the procedures and materials in advance because there may be no time or funds for doing so. In that case, the College lecturers must rely on their observations of student performance during the first period that the syllabus is in actual use for the purpose of finding out if any revisions are needed.

In conclusion, the University Senate has stipulated the required specifications for devising the teacher education programme called Secondary Teachers Diploma. As applicants for affiliation to the University of Zambia, you are required to present a document or programme outline and accompanying syllabuses of subjects you intend to offer and the rules and regulations for the conduct of the programme and its examinations. When the curriculum and the syllabuses have been approved by the Senate, you implement the programme for five years before reviewing it. During the implementation of the programme each course lecturer should play a role of observing and recording shortfalls of the course and present these to the Head of Department

(HoD) and Curriculum Review Committee of the College. The latter will consider proposals for changing programme and syllabuses. The proposals will be presented via the Advisory Unit for Colleges of Education who will in turn present the revised programme and syllabuses to the Professional Committee and the School of Education Curriculum Review Committee and the Board of Studies.

## **Conclusion**

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