
International Forum
Vol. 23, No. 1
June 2020
pp. 144-146

BOOK REVIEW

Mboneza Nsengiyimva Kabanda

Bibliography: Mackh, Bruce M. (2018). *Higher education by design: Best practices for curricular planning and instruction*. London, England: Routledge. 267 pages. \$44.95

Bruce Mackh earned a PhD in Critical Studies and Fine Arts from Texas Tech University. At Texas Tech, Mackh received a TEACH Fellowship award. He was the only one from the School of Arts to win this honor. Mackh has a strong interest in curriculum development, faculty development, and pedagogy.

Humans have always displayed the tendency to be subdivided into different categories at all levels of life. This is noted both in life in general and in the academic field as well. However, regardless of the category to which one belongs, all humans have in common the notion of creativity. It is creativity that leads to the resolution of problems at all stages. Due to creativity, Mackh, the author of *Higher Education by Design: Best Practices for Curricular Planning and Instruction*, recognizes himself as a “problem finder” and “problem-solver.” Both qualities require analytical reasoning (p. x). For the author, good curricular and instructional practices are motivated by the spirit of creativity to solve existing problems. Like an artistic painting, this book is attractively designed. Indeed, to master his art, nothing is more effective than practice, always combined with curiosity and discovery. In this book, Mackh considers that teachers in higher education are well skilled in their disciplines, but they rarely get proper teaching practices. To overcome this barrier, the author presents to teachers in higher education 11 best practices to consider in their teaching to bridge the gap and make their career successful. In this book, Mackh feels the same gap felt by Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, and Nevgi, (2007) who suggested to verify the efficacy of higher education teachers’ training in enhancing university teaching.

The first chapter “Beginning with the End in Mind,” reminds the readers that in the field of curriculum design, the planning of activities lays on the results envisioned, which will be reflected by students in their profession. Once the goals and objectives of the program are identified from the beginning, teaching practices will be set upon clear standards for observable and measurable results. For this reason, teachers are required to have more information related to different instructional theories.

Furthermore, Mackh emphasizes on instructional outcomes and objectives. For him, these elements should be included in the syllabus produced by the teacher,

which “should include a set of statements called “outcomes and objectives” (p. 44). This point reminds teachers that courses are designed with a specific purpose that inspires the writing of goals and outcomes.

Outcomes and objectives are key components in the process of learning evaluation. Indeed, in the chapter “Assessing Student Learning,” the author examines the type of assessments as well as many other ways to conduct assessment: quizzes, exams, assignments. Questions “should assess learning that the instructor hopes the students will remember in the long term” (p.73).

After writing outcomes and objectives associated with assessment tools to use in evaluating student learning, the teacher will think about how to plan for “Effective Instruction.” For the author, the potential success in achieving educational goals and objectives depends on good lesson planning. The teacher, however, will remember that planning is an ongoing task, modification and adaptation can occur as much as the experience grows. Here is reflected in the spirit of curiosity and creativity of the teacher.

In the teaching and learning process, writing skills are highly recommended. For this purpose, “every course should incorporate meaningful writing assignments that allow students to acquire the skills they need for professional written communication” (p. 111). Indeed, all disciplines have their colloquial speech. Thus, it is important to have specific standards and expectations for written communication.

Collaborative strategies, as well as many other strategies that enhance students’ engagement in the lesson, are important. In fact, higher educational institutions are preparing people for the job market in this 21st century. “The 21st century workplace is increasingly collaborative” (p. 131). To get started, teachers can implement cooperative learning strategies and structures such as jigsaw, think-pair-share, turn and talk study groups, and discussion groups.

Mackh points out that the effectiveness of teaching on campus occurs during lectures, discussions, students’ active involvement, and experimentations. However, in online classes, more skills are required from the teacher in terms of planning and making everything accessible ahead of time. Providing valuable feedback is among the teacher’s most important responsibilities in the online class. Indeed, the author states that “comments are powerful tools for enhancing students’ learning” (p. 168). Feedback is a relevant component of interactive teaching. In fact, the 21st-century skills entail focus on collaboration. Collaboration is necessary between teacher-students, students-students, and teachers-teachers. Since faculty are experts from different disciplines, the collaboration between colleagues from different backgrounds does not only bridge career connections but it also “provides students with learning experiences that align with the interdisciplinarity of the 21st century economy” (p. 220).

Mackh calls the attention of mindful teachers to think of their future in the teaching career. In fact, there is a dynamic obligation to grow and change status.

This supports the idea of Ramsden (2003) who understood the need for teachers to grow under the condition of applying evidence from research into student learning.

There is much more that can be said about this book. Without doubt, reading this book will influence the educational practices of faculty or any other teacher at any level. The author has presented strategies that, when implemented, can improve the performance of new and experienced teachers in higher education. Extensive references are presented at the end of every chapter. I can highly recommend this book to people from other disciplines as well as from education settings. Faculty without an educational background can enhance their teaching practices for the sake of their students in order to prepare them to meet job market requirements in the 21st century.

References

- Mackh, B. M. (2018). *Higher education by design: Best practices for curricular planning and instruction* (1st). London, UK: Routledge.
- Postareff, L., Lindblom-Ylänne, S., & Nevgi, A. (2007). The effect of pedagogical training on teaching in higher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23(5), 557–571. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2006.11.013
- Ramsden, P. (2003). *Learning to teach in higher education* (2nd ed.). London, UK: Routledge.

*Mboneza Nsengiymva Kabanda, PhD Student
Education Department, Graduate School
Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies*