

# Modularization In Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions: Theory and Practice

By Birhanu Asfaw  
Lecturer

# Background of the Study

- The differing views in philosophy of HE
  - education for the sake of knowledge
  - education for the sake of work
  - for some this argument as unrealistic.
- In the past times, especially after the medieval periods, liberal education
- In modern periods, vocational/professional edu..
- Consequently, the emphasis on competence and CBE has been widely advocated and grown.

- 1<sup>st</sup> introduced in US towards the end of the 1960s.
- Currently, CBE is favoured internationally.
- The basic principles and intentions of CBE are:
  - emphasizes the acquisition of essential skills;
  - requires greater workplace relevance;
  - focuses on measurable & observable competencies;
  - adaptive to students', teachers' and community's needs;
  - encourages integration between theory and practice.
  - appreciate authentic learning environment; and
  - recognize individual learning styles and abilities;

- Hence, it has been influencing the ways the curricula are designed and implemented.
- Modularization is a way of organizing and delivering CBE curriculum in HEIs.

# Statement of the Problem

- In Ethiopia, the major HEIs are owned by the state.
- Attention was not given to HE before 1990s and it was characterized by a number of problems.
- Since then, promising actions have been taken.
  - new policies, proclamations were issued & implemented;
  - effort has been made to expand and re-align HEIs;
  - all encompassing reforms have been made: targeting the overall system, the institutions, and the academic programs.
- For the reforms to take effect, HEIs have used BPR which emphasizes on modularization.

- In 2012/13 academic year a national harmonized modular curriculum was implemented in all **state owned** HEIs.
- However, whether or not the modular approach in Ethiopian HEIs is properly conceptualized and accompanied by the required changes as well as benefits is a debatable issue.

- The clarity, advantage, steps followed to design the curriculum, practicality and implementation of modular approach became an issue of debate and argument among the faculty of these institutions.
- Therefore, the question “does modularization properly conceptualized and practiced in Ethiopian HEIs?” is striking question that motivated me to...

- There is also a research gap in the area- despite an increasing interest in modularization, there is so little empirical research has actually been done on the topic.
- Very few studies that focused on academic staffs' as well as students' view towards modular approach have been conducted (Solomon et al, 2011; Derib et al, 2014).
- Hence, it is very important to deal with the issue so as to get clear picture of the modularization process of Ethiopian HEIs.

# Research Questions

- The following research questions are formulated to undertake this study:
  1. How is modularization conceptualized in Ethiopian HEIs?
  2. Why and how modularization is introduced to Ethiopian HEIs?
  3. How does the process of designing modular curriculum look like?
  4. How do university students, teachers, and leaders are practicing modularization?
  5. What are the major challenges that hamper the practice of modularization?

# Research Method and Design

➤ Qualitative multiple case study research design.

## Data sources

- key informants (individuals who initiated the idea of modularization at national and institutional levels),
- members of governing and advisory bodies (university presidents, deans, directors, and department heads),
- academic staffs and
- students,
- officials and experts working in the MoE (HESC) and
- university senate legislations, meeting minutes, and curricular materials (modules, course outlines, etc.).

# Instruments of data collection

This research will use three data collection tools –

- 1. documents***
- 2. interviews***
- 3. focus group discussion/FGD/***

# Case selection and participant recruitment

Three types of selection and recruitment techniques have been used in this study.

1. Purposive sampling technique
2. Second, snowball sampling technique
3. Maximum variation sampling technique

# Data Analysis

- The *meaning of analysis context* has been used - the data is not coded sentence by sentence or paragraph by paragraph, but coded for meaning.
- As this study follows the multiple case design, the data has been analyzed case by case through thematic analysis and later by cross-case analysis.
- Thus, interviews, FGDs and documents has been analyzed for each case.
- Following the case by case analysis, all themes has been used to conduct the cross-case analysis.
- For the thematic analysis, I followed the step-by-step guidelines of Braun and Clarke (2006),

# Conceptual Framework

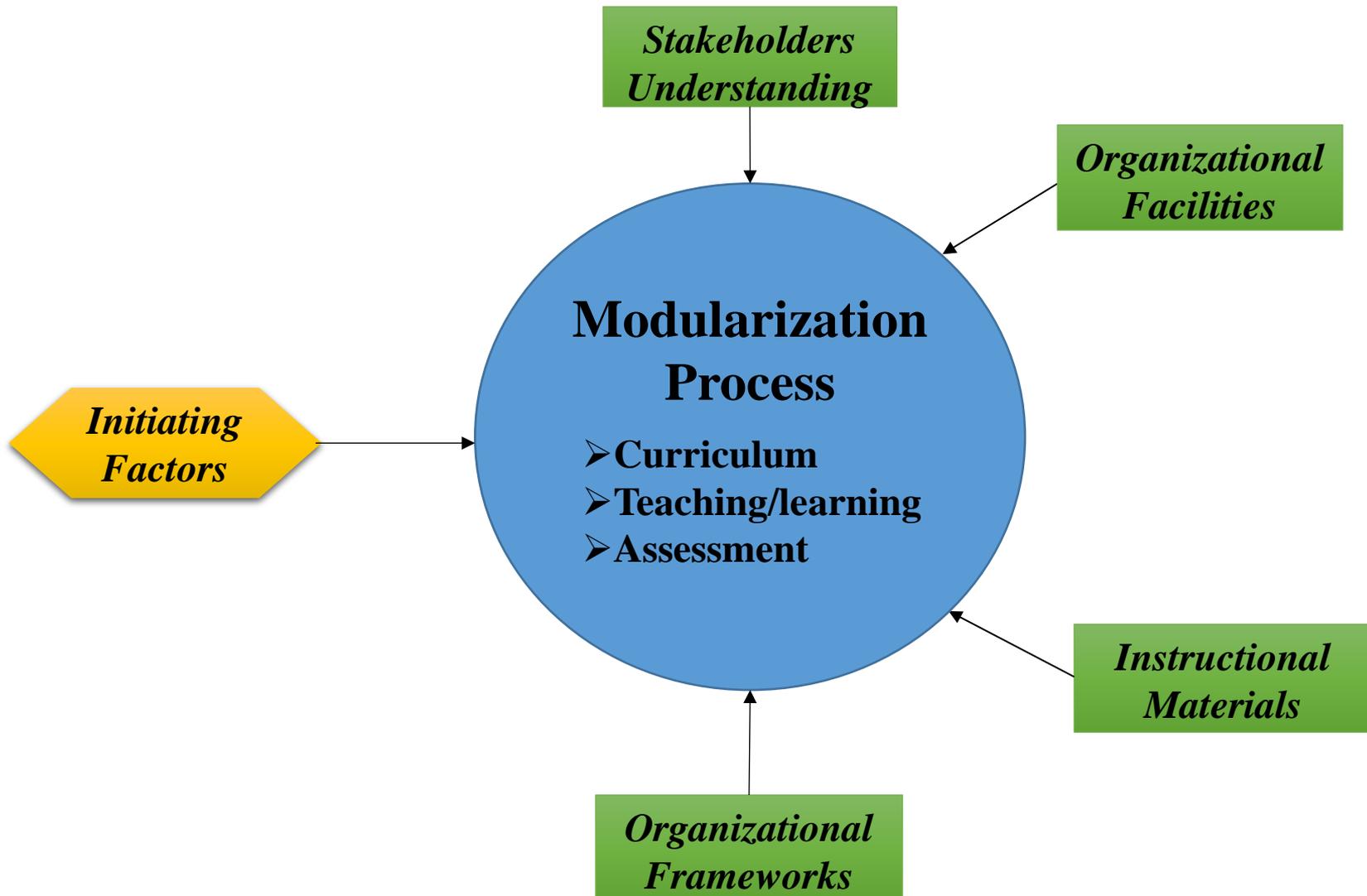


Figure 1: Model Conceptual Framework for the Study

# Findings of the study

- This research finding is concerned only on the first research question of my dissertation; i.e. **How modularization is conceptualized in Ethiopian HEIs?**
- More specifically, it is concerned with the responses of college deans, instructors and students of **one public university** to the following questions:
  1. What do you understand about the concept of modularization?
  2. What makes modularization different from other approaches? And;
  3. What promises does modularization have for the students, for the institution, for the society and for the country at large?

# Findings

cont....

**Table 1: Sampling description for AKU**

<b>Participantes</b>	<b>Instruments</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Collage Deans	Interview	3	
Instructor	FGD	14	3 FGDs (5,5,4)
Students	FGD	26	3 FGDs (7,9,10)

# Findings

cont....

- The findings of this study were made based on the major pre-established themes derived from the research questions and the emerging themes from the participants' responses to the questions.
- The major research questions and the subsequent themes identified under each question are presented in the tables below.
- The pre-established themes are:
  - Meaning
  - Features
  - Advantages

*Table 2: Research questions and major themes*

Research questions	Pre-Established Themes	Emerging Themes
<p>What do you understand about the concept of modularization?</p>	<p><b>The meaning</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● designing courses based on competencies;</li> <li>● organizing courses according to their logical order;</li> <li>● clustering/grouping closely related courses in a module;</li> <li>● integrating knowledge, skill and attitude;</li> <li>● use of student-centered instruction;</li> <li>● use of continuous assessment techniques and ECTS;</li> <li>● harmonization of curriculum.</li> </ul>

## Students

- clustering closely related courses in a module;
- use of student-centered instruction;
- use of continuous assessment techniques and ECTS;

## Instructors

- clustering/grouping closely related courses in a module;
- designing courses based on competencies;
- organizing courses according to their logical order;
- harmonization of curriculum.
- integrating knowledge, skill and attitude;
- use of student-centered instruction;
- use of continuous assessment techniques and ECTS;

## College deans

- ❖ clustering/grouping closely related courses in a module;
- ❖ designing courses based on competencies;
- ❖ organizing courses according to their logical order;
- ❖ harmonization of curriculum.
- ❖ integrating knowledge, skill and attitude;
- ❖ use of student-centered instruction;
- ❖ use of continuous assessment techniques and ECTS;

Meaning

*Table 2*

*cont...*

Research questions	Pre-Established Themes	Emerging Themes
<b>What makes modularization different from other approaches?</b>	<b>The features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● clarity,</li><li>● focus on competence,</li><li>● self-contained modules,</li><li>● integration,</li><li>● active students involvement,</li><li>● ECTS,</li><li>● linkage,</li><li>● variety of learning and assessment techniques</li></ul>

## Students

- integration,
- active students involvement,
- ECTS,
- variety of learning and assessment techniques

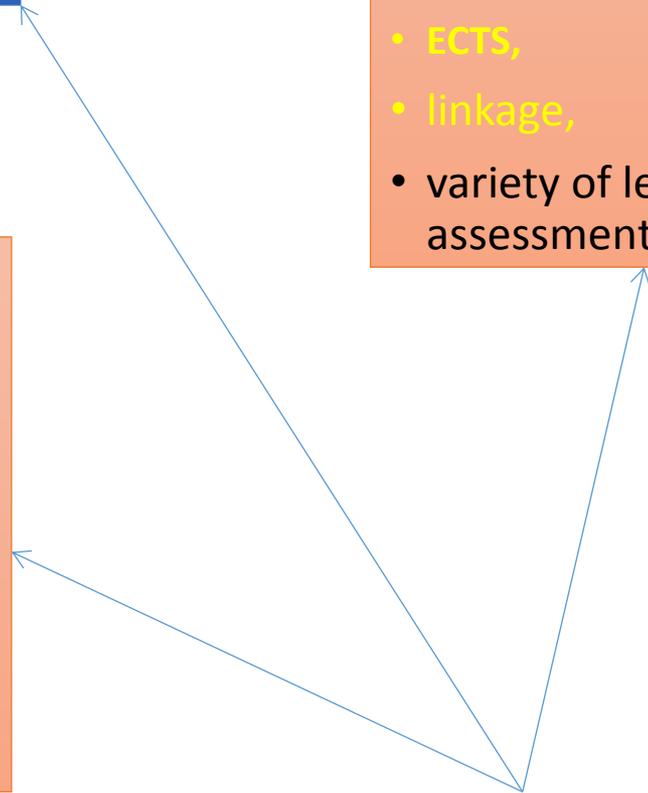
## College deans

- creativity
- focus on competence,
- self-contained modules
- integration,
- ECTS,
- linkage,
- variety of learning and assessment techniques

## College deans

- focus on competence,
- self-contained modules,
- integration,
- active students involvement,
- ECTS,
- linkage,
- variety of learning and assessment techniques

**Features**



*Table*

*cont...*

Research questions	Pre-Established Themes	Emerging Themes
<b>What promises does modularization have?</b>	<b>The advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● harmonization,</li><li>● mobility,</li><li>● student participation,</li><li>● linkage,</li><li>● competent graduates,</li><li>● Students' freedom;</li></ul>

# Advantages

## Students

- mobility
- student participation
- competent graduates
- Students' freedom

## Instructors

- harmonization
- mobility
- student participation
- linkage
- competent graduates
- Students' freedom

## College deans

- harmonization
- mobility
- student participation
- linkage
- competent graduates
- Students' freedom

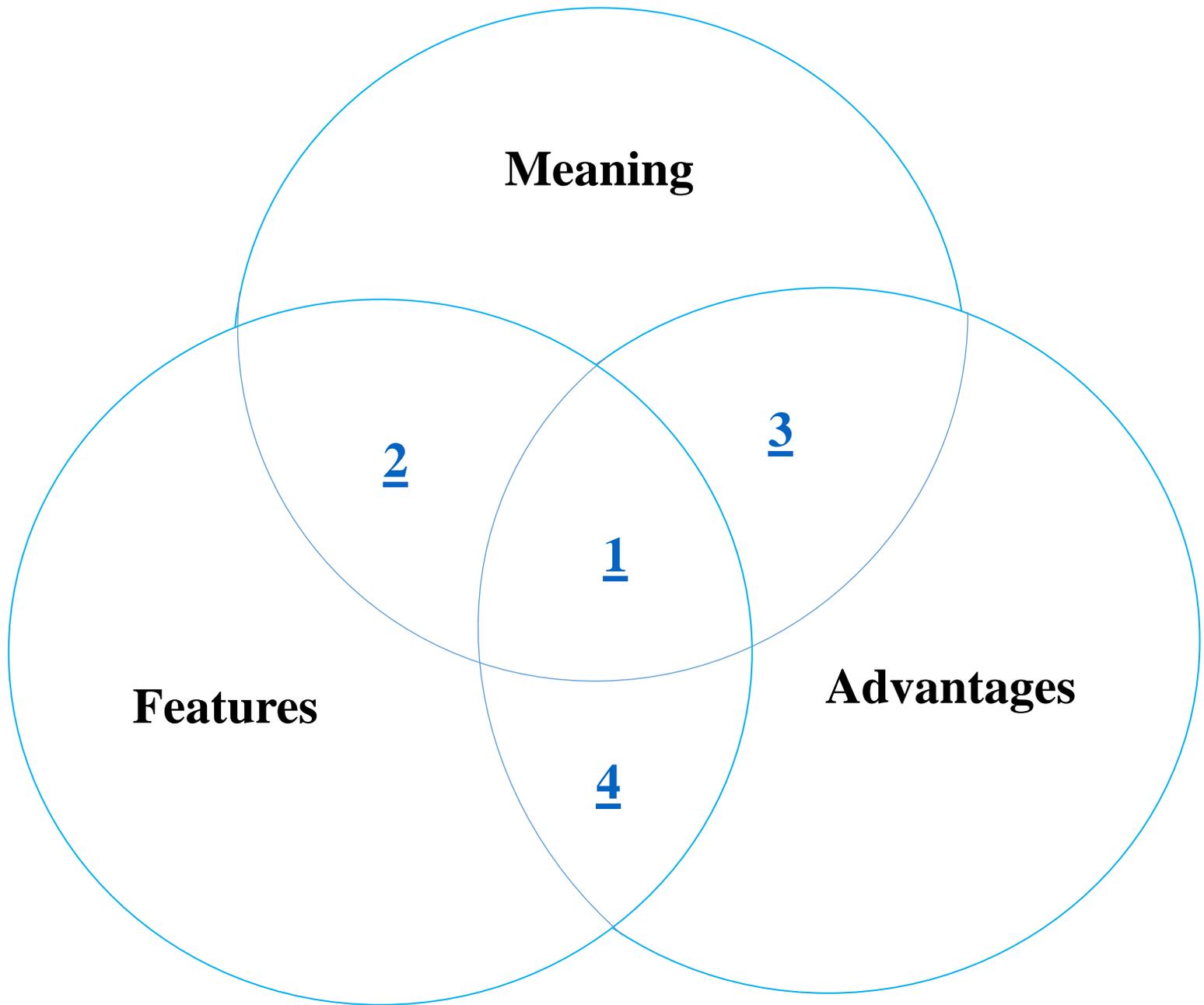


Figure 1: Intersections between themes

# Concluding Remarks

- Despite the fact that there is a limitation on the side of the student to properly comprehend the terminology (i.e. modularization), college deans, instructors and students of WKU have relatively a wider understanding of modularization closer to that found in different literatures.

# Concluding Remarks

Summary of the major issues raised

- Focus on competencies;
- Logical order of learning activities;
- Use of modules;
- Integrating knowledge, skill and attitude;
- Use of student-centered instruction;
- Use of continuous assessment techniques and ECTS;
- Harmonization of curriculum;
- Clarity in specifying learning outcomes and roles;
- Focus on linking theory & practice, learning & work;
- Harmonization of the curriculum;
- Enhancing student mobility;
- Fostering students' freedom;

Thank you for your  
attention!