

Some Deficiencies in Professional Courses Offered to Diploma Students in Kotebe College of Teacher Education

Tilahun Fanta*

Introduction

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Taking this into consideration, this paper tries to trace the situation of professional courses offered in Kotebe College of Teacher Education in line with the achievements and shortcomings they tend to reflect. The writer attempts to examine the issue based on views forwarded by various scholars regarding the nature and extent of professional courses given in Teacher Training Colleges.

Background of the study

Teachers are said to be the key to most educational processes. To effectively carry out this responsibility, beside personal qualities, they are supposed to have proper training. During their stay in the training center, they have to have relevant and balanced professional and academic education. If teachers reflect in their own persons the essence of sound professional education, if they are academically alive and socially concerned, then they are likely to influence their students constructively (Cottrell, 1956:12).

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teaching responsibilities. In other words, they must develop the knowledge and the skill that would help them later to enable their students learn.

The essence of teacher education involves a given amount of general education, subject-matter specialization and professional training (Conant, 1963:43). This kind of teachers education essence, in the final analysis, is expected to produce successful teachers. Successful teachers, in this sense, means teachers manifesting skills like: motivating students rather than forcing, relating materials in class to learners' experience and societal needs, recognizing individual needs of pupils, cooperating with the whole staff in solving school problems, etc.

The central idea around which training of teachers rotates seems to be the creation of awareness that they are engineering human beings, and this requires developing their ability and making sound professional preparation while they are in colleges. Hence, an ideal that calls for the right kind of teacher and the right kind of training is the development of faith, wisdom and skill based on human understanding (Walters, 1960:VIII).

A professional teacher is involved in responsible actions which include the act of teaching, the act of curriculum development, the act of educational leadership and the act of problem solving (Tanner and Tanner, 1980:626-627). Thus, colleges of teacher education are supposed to help teachers acquire conceptual and professional tools with which they can manage the above mentioned actions.

Besides, teachers are to be directed on how to indicate their own practical instructional problems and thereby solve them. These kinds of theoretical and practical principles on how to use scientific methods for overcoming difficulties are also to be part of their training. Regarding this Tanner and Tanner (1980:650) stress that teachers ought to have research knowledge and skill so that they could diagnose problems and test possible solutions under the guidance of consultants who have expertise in research methodology. Therefore,

teacher training programs are supposed to bear some basic knowledge and practice in research techniques.

Considering the issue of training teachers, in the new Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia (1994:20) the following has been stated: *Teacher education and training components will emphasise basic knowledge, professional code of ethics, methodology and practical training.* This shows that teaching, as a profession, calls for general knowledge, behavioural change, professional ethics and practical ability.

Statement of the Problem

There is no question that teachers should be trained so that they could reflect the essence of the profession mentioned in the preceding part. Training is one of the major means, if not the only, to create and develop teaching competencies. Walters (1960: VIII) strongly emphasizes that: *...improvement comes only with deeper understanding of all that is involved in our task as a teacher, there is no short-cut; and no simple prescription to meet all the varied challenges facing different teachers from day to day.*

Thus, training courses in teachers colleges are one of the ways by which such awareness is caused.

Untrained teachers, in most cases, are found to be inactive. This is what we have practically witnessed in the earlier days, with primary school teachers directly employed and not given in-service education, or are not exposed to workshops or seminars. Such teachers even if provided with the best kind of materials and situations, may remain ineffective. Pratt (1980:390) states that *... an excellent curriculum is unlikely to be successful in the hands of incompetent teachers.*

Some of the problems in teacher training programs are related to questions such as:

- What proportions should be maintained between the general courses, the professional courses and the subject area courses?
- What types of professional courses are to be selected, designed and offered?
- With what coverage should the courses be given (in-terms of credit hours)?

There are no universal and comprehensive answers to the above questions. They may vary from country to country, from region to region, from college to college. However, I found it necessary to unfold views forwarded by some authors in relation to planning teacher training program courses so that this may help us examine the practice of teacher training in Kotobe College of Teacher Education.

Some curriculum authorities advise training colleges to take job description and task analysis as a base for deciding training program courses. For example, McNeil (1990:12) explains the issue in detail as follows:

Job description and task analysis procedures are used to enhance the relevance of the training program to the job to be performed. A job description is a paragraph or two listing the tasks involved and any unusual conditions under which those tasks are carried out.

He states further:

The curriculum developer tries to answer these questions: what tasks are required on this job? How frequently are they required? What skills and information is the graduate of the training program expected to bring to each task? ... from these data new training objectives are derived for courses.

Based on this, Cottrell (1956:181) gives the following to be common professional courses for secondary school teachers:

Exploring the Teaching Profession	3 cr. hrs.
Human Growth and Development Psychology of Learning, and the School in Society	15 cr. hrs.
Student teaching	12 cr. hrs.
Problems of teaching	3 cr. hrs.
Total	33 cr. hrs.

Similarly, Conant (1963:158) suggests the following to be given for trainees:

General requirement	60 cr. hrs.
Concentration (major)	30 cr. hrs.
Professional	30 cr. hrs.
Total	120 cr. hrs.

He further states that the suggested 30 credit hours professional courses should be distributed as follows

Child growth and development	3 cr. hrs.
History (philosophy) of education	3 cr. hrs.
Teaching of reading	3 cr. hrs.
Workshops in content and method	13 cr. hrs.
Practise teaching	8 cr. hrs.

These are suggested for training teachers working in a developed society. In our case, where teachers function under several educational constraints, the training may call for more independent variety of courses.

As stated so far, literature given by scholars in the field and the current practice reveal that the curriculum of a teacher training program should contain specialized subject area courses, general courses and professional courses. What is important here is the realization of a reasonable proportion among all the three, based on the trainees' job description as teachers.

In line with this, the new Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia (1994:22, article 3, 4.9) stresses: *Teacher training institutions of all levels will be required to gear their programs towards the appropriate education level for which they train teachers.*

It means teacher training centers will be checked to make sure their programs produce teachers with qualities relevant to the school levels they are supposed to serve.

To this effect, this paper attempts to make a brief survey of the diploma program professional courses offered in Kotebe College of Teacher Education referring to the following two specific points; the weight given to each professional course (the credit hours assigned to each) and the proportion the courses together make when compared with the general and subject area courses.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to find out the adequacy level of the professional courses offered to diploma students in Kotebe College of Teacher Education in line with what is expected of the trainees when they take-up the actual task (teaching). It also focuses on indicating the weaknesses regarding the proportion between these professional courses and the other courses as a whole (major, minor and general course).

Delimitation of the Study

The study is limited to referring to the course area, course titles and course credit hours. The detailed nature of the courses (which calls for analyzing the course objectives, descriptions, outlines, etc.) is not dealt with. This was due to time constraint.

Design of the Study

The study is basically descriptive. The source of data is the course catalogue of the College revised in August 1999. The course load of

nine diploma offering departments at graduation is taken and broken down into subject area and professional course load. Furthermore the total load of the professional courses is listed down into its specific courses and the respective credit hours.

The analysis is made by referring to the percentage relationship between the professional courses as a whole and subject area courses together. Besides, the list of the professional courses is taken to describe the shortcomings related to adequacy.

Table 1: Total Number of Credits in Professional Courses

Department	Subject area courses credit hours		Credits in Prof. courses		Total Credits
	No	%	No	%	
Biology	58	79.4	15	20.6	73
Chemistry	59	79.7	15	20.3	74
English	59	79.7	15	20.3	74
Eth. Languages and Literature	59	79.7	15	20.3	74
Geography	59	79.7	15	20.3	74
Health and Physical Education	59	79.7	15	20.3	74
History	59	79.7	15	20.3	74
Mathematics	58	79.4	15	20.6	73
Physics	59	79.7	15	20.3	74
Average	58.8	79.6	15	20.4	73.8

Source: Kotebe College of Teacher Education Course Catalogue, Aug. 1999.

As indicated in Table 1, the total number of credits in professional courses in Kotebe College of Teacher Education (K.C.T.E) is 15 for all the departments. This comprises 20.40 percent of the total load. When this is seen from the point of view of conventional practice and what has been suggested by some educators, it seems to be very small. For example, according to the suggestions of Conant (1963:158) and Cottrell (1956:181), professional courses make about 28 percent of the whole training load. If we start with this proposal of Conant, what is being given in Kotebe as professional courses is only 72 percent of the expected.

On the other hand, if we examine the kinds and the respective weight (credit hours) of these professional courses, (given with the total of 15 credit hours), we may still trace some weaknesses.

Table 2: Types of Professional Courses and Respective Credit Hours in Kotebe College for Diploma Program

Course Title	Course Code	Cr. Hr.
Psychology I	Epsy. 111	3
Psychology II	Epsy. 122	2
General Methodology	Educ. 122	3
History & Philosophy of Educ.	Educ. 111	2
Instructional Media	Educ. 231	2
Measurement and Evaluation	Epsy. 231	3
Teaching Practice	Educ. 241	0
Total		15

Source: Kotebe College of Teacher Education Course Catalogue, Aug. 1999.

As depicted in Table 2, the two psychology courses with a total credit of 5 are fairly adequate. In this 5 cr. hr. the course instructor may be able to give enough theoretical and practical background to help the trainees to predict and solve some instructional problems referring to learners' behaviour and development.

Similarly the other four courses, Educ. 111, Educ. 231, Educ. 122 and Epsy. 231 are given 2, 2, 3 and 3 cr. hr. respectively and this is adequate to treat all the basics pertaining to teaching in the junior grades. However, extreme unfairness is observed in the way the College treats the course *Teaching Practice*.

The course *Teaching Practice* is supposed to be the core of the whole training because it allows the trainees to change theory into practice. Walters (1960:53) states:

In all training therefore the core of the whole course is that part wherein a student is given opportunity and guidance in relating the principles and theoretical knowledge he is acquiring to the real life situations in which they must ultimately be practised or applied, and

for teachers this means the day-to-day procedure in school and classroom.

The trainees in the College take this course with zero credit hours - with *P* or *F* grade. Scholars in the field suggest between 8 and 12. This is worse than the problem of a minimum small cr. hr. as seen in other teacher training colleges. Though the trainees go to schools with grades 5 to 8 for the practice, they will not show their maximum effort (as they do for other courses) because this time what they get for their performance is simply pass (*P*) or fail (*F*) which does not affect their G.P.A. Other than the above mentioned weakness, when we make a thorough examination of Table 2, we see that the College has left out professional courses that enable trainees to perform as much as what is expected of them as teachers.

A course on basic principles of curriculum has been left out. McNeil (1990:386) states that teachers can be helped in their attempt to improve curriculum by making them to deal with points answering questions such as: 1) what is curriculum? 2) what development results in a need for curriculum revision? 3) what is the function of subject matter? 4) what is the best way to organize instruction? 5) how should we select subject matter?, and 6) how should we measure the outcomes of instruction?

In addition to this, the new Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia (1994:2) indicates that one of the future tasks is to *create a mechanism by which teachers ... participate in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the curriculum.*

As stated by McNeil, teachers can realize the Educational Policy when they get certain orientation on basic knowledge of curriculum. This could best be done when the trainees are in colleges. But Kotebe College of Teacher Education cannot do this because it does not give curriculum as part of the professional courses.

The other possible defect one can find from Table 2 is the absence of a course providing students with the fundamental knowledge of

research methodology. I point out this as one deficiency because in the Education and Training Policy (1994:9), Article 2, 2.6 stipulates that *education, training and research be appropriately integrated with development by focusing on research.*

Thus, orientation on nature and methodology of research seems to be essential to the trainees; however, it is omitted by the College.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on what has been discussed, the following concluding remarks can be made:

- The proportion of professional courses credit hours to the general, minor and major area courses are incompatible. Thus, some up-lifting measure seems necessary.
- The zero cr. hr. with *P* or *F* grade assigned to the course *Teaching Practice* is in disagreement with the central role the course serves. Hence, it is advisable that the College pays attention to this.
- In line with teacher responsibility stated in the new Education and Training Policy and attempts being made to improve teachers' quality, courses that provide basic knowledge and skill in research and curriculum are essential. Therefore, it is proper to include them as part of professional courses.

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