
A Summary of Findings of an Investigation into the Pedagogical Knowledge of Instructors

Elias Nasir

I. Introduction

It is obvious that any profession requires trained man power. Essential, specialized knowledge alone may not ensure professional competence of individuals. Specialized knowledge is helpful and may contribute to the fulfilment of any task if integrated with professional knowledge.

By the same token, the teaching profession is one of the widely practised professions dealing with complex human interactions. It takes place in social institutions which are characterized by diverse behaviour of pupils. It is an interplay of events. It is a task that one can not handle by knowledge of the subject matter alone. Hence, teachers at various levels need to have professional knowledge in addition to subject matters so as to do effective teaching. Taba (1969): 131) says that there is no doubt that extending the mastery of academic background would improve teaching. It would be foolhardy to assume that strengthening the background alone ensures effective teaching.

The idea of encouraging training for teaching is highly supported by experts in the methodology of teaching. Azeb (1986:28) stresses that, especially in teaching, knowing the subject matter alone is worthless. One must know also how to teach it effectively. She goes on to say that the teaching profession, like any others, calls for professional knowledge, skills and practices. The need for professional preparation and train-

ing of teachers at any level cannot be avoided (1986: 228).

It is, therefore, unquestionable that knowledge in the areas of pedagogics contributes to the professional competence of teachers in schools and instructors in colleges and universities. As a result, pedagogical courses like Methodology of Teaching, Curriculum Inquiry and Measurement and Evaluation are necessary for teachers since they enable them to handle teaching effectively.

With this in mind, an attempt was made to make an investigation of the pedagogical knowledge of instructors in the Faculty of Business and Economics, Addis Ababa University. The study gives emphasis to the basic pedagogical skills pertinent to classroom instructions.

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

- Did instructors of Faculty of Business and Economics take any training in methods of teaching?
- To what extent do the instructors demonstrate basic pedagogical skills during classroom instructions?
- Do the instructors feel that they need training in the methodology of teaching?

Methods and Procedures

The descriptive method was employed in this study. 38 instructors and 104 fourth year students in the Faculty were used as data sources.

In order to gather data about basic pedagogical skills, the researcher used questionnaires. Closed and open ended questionnaires were constructed and administered to instructors. In the case of questionnaire items for students, the researcher adopted the questionnaire of Wolansky cited in Azeb (1984: 261-62).

As Genova, cited in Azeb (1984: 93-94) reported student ratings can provide reliable and valid information on the quality of instruction. Such information can be used by academic departments for the evaluation of teaching and may aid the individual instructors to improve their teaching effectiveness.

Based on these background about student ratings of instructors' performance, the researcher used some of Wolansky's (1977) items for evaluation of teachers.

In this survey the basic pedagogical skills evaluated include: Instructors' skills of course organization and planning, methods of presentation and their relationships with students. The summary of findings has been presented below.

Summary of Findings

Based on the analysis and interpretation of the data, the following major findings have been identified.

1. About 79 % of the instructors did not take any pre-service training in teacher

education. It is also evident from the data that all of the instructors didn't participate in any form of in-service training, seminars and workshops related to methods of teaching.

2. Most of the instructors demonstrate subject matter mastery as reported by 56 % of the students. But none of the instructors use a variety of teaching methods and encourage class discussions as stated by 38 % and 46 % of the students, respectively. It is also shown by 44 % of the students that only few instructors communicate effectively.
3. Most of the instructors are interested in teaching as reported by 42 % of the students.
4. It is found out that there is interaction gap between instructors and students. Fifty two percent of the students indicated that few instructors seek out students needing help, and 22 % said that none of them practise it. Twenty nine percent reported that only few instructors are willing to help students outside class time. Thirty nine and 29 % of the students also respectively indicated that few, and none of the instructors are willing to accept feelings of students.
5. Forty six % of the students replied that few instructors construct examinations based on course objectives, and 28 % said that none of the instructors do this. Few instructors construct exams with content validity as indicated by 40 % of the students, and none of them set such examinations as indicated by 35 % of the students.
6. Seventy six % of the instructors need to have training in teaching methods. They suggested that they need short term train-

ings, seminars and workshops in methodology during vacation.

Conclusion

In light of the basic questions raised at the beginning of the study and the major findings summarized above, the following conclusion have been made.

The investigation made on the basic pedagogical skills of instructors of the Faculty of Business and Economics revealed that most instructors did not have any training in education courses prior to their employment. It is also revealed that none of them did participate in methodology workshops held at different times when the Faculty was part of the College of Social Science.

Most instructors demonstrate competence in subject matter mastery and display strong interest in teaching. However, they lack the essential skills of teaching methods and techniques, of creating genuine relationship with students.

They also lack those skills that would enable them to construct examination items based on course objectives and contents. In principle, examination items should cover the whole content of the course so as to make objective evaluations.

Taking into consideration the necessity of basic teaching skills to foster good teaching, most of the instructors of the Faculty positively expressed their interest in the methodology of teaching. They suggested that short term training, workshops and seminars in this need to be arranged so that future teaching - learning processes will improve.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion, the researcher forwards the following suggestions:

- The study shows that most instructors lack basic skills of teaching though they demonstrate subject mastery. As the instructors themselves mentioned, seminars and workshops on methodology of teaching need to be organized by those concerned. This would be done by having thorough discussions with experts in the Faculty of Education.
- The interest of instructors of the Faculty in the teaching profession needs to be strengthened and reinforced through deliberate integration of subject matter knowledge with the knowledge of education courses.
- The importance and necessity of education courses should not be limited only to teachers at primary and secondary levels. Teachers at the tertiary level should also be aware of the importance of such courses and this needs to be encouraged by University officials.

This study is limited only to the Faculty of Business and Economics. Hence, the researcher suggests the Department of Curriculum and Instruction to conduct similar studies on other faculties of the University. Such studies may enable experts in the area to set some standards of refresher courses of methods of teaching for University instructors in general.

Bibliography

Azeb Desta (1984), **A Resource Handbook of Strategies for improving Tertiary level Teaching**, unpublished Research paper, Canada: Queen's University.

Azeb Desta (1984), **Elements of General Methods of Teaching**, unpublished Teaching Material, Addis Ababa University.

Azeb Desta (1986), **The Fallacy in Assuming that knowledge of subject Matter Alone Ensures Effective Teaching**. Unpublished Research paper, Addis Ababa University.

Cyriacou, C. (1991) **Essential Teaching Skill**. England: Basil, Blackwell, Ltd.

Taba, H, "Teaching Strategy and Learning", In L. N. Nelsen (1969), **The Nature of Teaching: A collection of Readings**. (ed.), Washington DC: Grinn and Company.