



PREPAREDNESS OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS IN PUNJAB

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Abstract

The teacher education programmes are considered to prepare the prospective teachers in such a way that they may assume the responsibilities of educational profession. Ideally, it aims at developing understanding and competencies among prospective teachers which are required by practicing teachers for effective teaching-learning process. With the commercialization of teacher education became weak both in theory and practice. Justice Verma committee has raised questions on malpractices in teacher education and its inefficiency to prepare effective teachers. The present study aimed to investigate the level of preparedness of prospective teachers who were at the verge of completion of their B.Ed. course in Colleges of Education in Punjab. For the purpose, 210 prospective teachers were selected from ten Colleges of Education situated in Punjab by employing multistage random sampling. These prospective teachers were tested for their subject mastery, pedagogical awareness, guidance and counselling skills, language proficiency and attitude towards teaching. Results showed that most of the prospective teachers lacked these attributes of effective teachers. It calls for inclusion of relevant contents and practices in teacher education which can infuse requisite attributes and competencies among the prospective teachers and prepare them for challenges of school teaching.

Introduction

Teachers are the greatest assets of any education system. They stand at the interface of the transmission of knowledge, skills and values to students. Gone are the days when one found the tendency to treat the art of teaching as that of stuffing pupils with knowledge. The expectations of the school system from a teacher change from time to time, responding to the broader social, economic and political changes taking place in the society. During recent years, the epistemology of learning has undergone a major change; i.e. learning does not involve discovering the reality, but constructing the reality. Knowledge and cognitions are to be constructed and affects are to be felt. Thus, learning is no more passive absorption of knowledge and ideas, but the construction of ideas developed on one's personal experiences. This concept has come to be known as situated cognition and is the guiding principle of the National curriculum Framework for School Education, 2005. It is envisaged that a teacher needs to be prepared in relation to the needs and demands arising in the school context, to engage with questions of school knowledge, the learner and the learning

process.

This change necessitates subsequent efforts to adjust the teacher preparation curricula accordingly. The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE, 2010) tries to ensure that teacher education courses align with the epistemological shift as envisaged in the NCF (2005) and develop teachers as facilitators of learning. But due to commercialization of B.Ed. colleges, the teacher education became weak both in theory and practice (NCFTE 2010). The education colleges have become stagnant in terms of their growth as the approach used by these is highly traditional which did not change over the decades. The recommendations to prepare humanistic and reflective teachers who have the potential to develop more professional teachers and improve the quality of education seems to be absent from the agenda of money munching colleges of education. The present teacher education program adopted by various universities/colleges appears to be inadequate to meet the challenges.

Ideally, it is assumed that teacher education prepares the student teachers for teaching profession by providing the relevant knowledge, attitude and skills to function effectively in their profession. It serves to equip the student teachers with the conceptual, theoretical framework and practical aspects through which they can excel in their profession. But it is envisaged that teacher education systems work with the conventional approach, where they follow a ritual in which the teachers are trained to adjust into the existing education system. Due to commercialization of B.Ed. colleges, the teacher education became weak both in theory and practice (NCFTE 2010). The education colleges have become stagnant in terms of their growth as the approach used by these is highly traditional which did not change over the decades.

Many questions have been raised regarding pedagogy of teacher education such as: insufficient field experience, not preparing them for the complexities classroom life, incongruence between the teacher education program and “real world”, less focus on ICT skills, viewing of “disciplinary knowledge” as independent of professional training in pedagogy, no place for evaluating attitude, disposition, habit and interest in teacher etc. (Kumar, 2012; Haser, 2010; Sharma 2012; Taneja 2014; Tezci, 2011). Researchers noted that at all stages, teacher education institutions provide little or inadequate professional training to handle the tasks for training effective teachers. With the mushrooming of teacher education institutions over the years, the situation has become critical. The quality of training given to the prospective teachers is being compromised. In this scenario it becomes imperative to assess their preparedness for teaching after completion of B.Ed. course.

Purpose of the Study

The present study was designed to assess the levels of core competencies of an effective teacher i.e. subject knowledge, pedagogical awareness, guidance and counselling skills, attitude towards teaching and language proficiency,) among secondary teacher trainees.

Methodology

Descriptive survey method was employed to conduct this study. Survey method was used to identify the most desirable/ indispensable attributes (qualities and skills) of an effective teacher as perceived by students, parents, and heads of schools. Based on the expectations, secondary teacher trainees (student teachers) were evaluated for their preparedness to teach in schools. For this their subject mastery, understanding about pedagogy, attitude towards teaching, teaching effectiveness and guidance & counselling skills were tested. Sample of stakeholders of school education included 400 school students from 20 schools, 27 school principals and fifty parents. Besides this, sample of 210 secondary teacher trainees were taken from ten Colleges of Education situated in Punjab. Information from school students about desirable attributes of teachers was obtained on a questionnaire whereas semi-structured interviews were conducted with principals and focus group discussion with parents for the same. To assess the teacher trainees on above mentioned aspects, tests were constructed by the researchers.

Findings

Students, principals and parents (more than 80%) perceived that following attributes were mandatory for being effective teacher: Subject mastery; pedagogical understanding and skills; knowledge regarding variety of teaching methods; guidance and counseling skills; adequate knowledge about contemporary educational policies and issues; proficiency in classroom management skills; effective communication skills; general knowledge; use of constructivist approach; creativity; encourage rationality and critical thinking etc.

Out of these traits, the prospective teachers i.e. student teachers pursuing B.Ed. course were assessed for their subject mastery, understanding about pedagogy, attitude towards teaching, teaching effectiveness and guidance & counselling skills. The results are given below:

➤ *Level of subject mastery*

With regards to subject mastery of student teachers from social science stream in their major subject i.e. Social Science, it was found that most of the trainees had poor knowledge of the subject for which they are being trained to teach at schools after completing the B.Ed. course. More than fifty percent (56.3%) exhibited poor performance in the subject mastery test as they were not even able to score 40% in the test, which was considered to be the passing marks. About 12.7% of the trainees exhibited average subject mastery by scoring between 50%-60% marks in the test. A very few (3.6%) exhibited above average performance (i.e. scored 61%-75%) and only 1% obtained more than 75% marks in the test.

The performance of teacher trainees from science stream in Science mastery test was also not satisfactory as almost one third of the sample (32.4%) was not able to score the passing marks on the Science subject mastery test thus exhibited poor knowledge

about the subject. Few trainees (17.1%) scored between 40%-50% marks in the test and possessed below average knowledge. Only 19.8% of the trainees scored between 60-75% marks thus showed good knowledge of science subject. Only 9.9% of them obtained more than 75% marks on this test thus had excellent subject knowledge.

➤ *Pedagogic awareness*

Most of the student teachers (89.3%) lacked in pedagogic awareness and understanding as they did not obtain even passing marks (i.e. forty percent marks) on Pedagogic Awareness Test. Only 11% of the trainees who scored between 41%- 50% marks on the test. Not even a single trainee who exhibited even average performance on the pedagogical awareness test.

➤ *Proficiency in Guidance and Counseling*

More than half of the sample (57.1%) of teacher trainees knew a little about Guidance and Counselling as they performed poor on the specified test i.e. scored less than 40% in the test and 27.6% of them possessed below average knowledge in the field of guidance and counselling (scored between 41% - 50%). There was not even a single trainee (out of 210) who scored 75% marks or above. Very few (3.3%) scored between 61%-75% of marks in the test.

Further, it was found that about half of the sample possessed conceptual knowledge about guidance and counselling, its types etc. but less than one third of the sample could respond correctly on the questions related to practical implications of the basic concepts such as need of educational guidance; methods to impart vocational information; role of aptitude, IQ and creativity; how to measure these, process of vocational guidance, reflective listening, understanding a child empathetically and how to test intelligence level of differently able children. It was found that on situational questions based on these concepts, majority of them were unable to answer correctly.

➤ *Attitude of Teachers towards Teaching*

A large percentage (70%) of the trainees had unfavourable attitude towards teaching. Out of these, 37.61% trainees exhibited highly unfavourable attitude towards teaching and 35.2% exhibited unfavourable attitude towards teaching. Only 17% trainees possessed favourable attitude as 12.38% with favourable and 4.76% with highly favourable attitude towards teaching. Remaining 10% of the trainees had moderately favourable level of attitude towards teaching.

➤ *Language Proficiency*

Around 40% of the trainees (38.09%) possessed below average skill as they were able to score between 21% - 40% in writing test. About one fourth of the sample of trainees (25.2%) had average writing skills and 15.23% showed above average writing skills by scoring between 60-80% on the test. There were very few trainees

i.e. 1 in 10 (10.47%) who scored more than 8 marks in this test thus exhibited excellent writing skills.

Discussion of the Results

Overall, the results pertaining to preparation of trainees to be effective teachers in terms of subject knowledge, guidance and counseling skills, pedagogical awareness, teaching skills, language proficiency and attitudes show that trainees were not sufficiently prepared in any of these aspects. It seems that during teacher education emphasis was neither on 'what to teach' nor on 'how to teach'. Lampert suggested that training teachers in the pedagogical behavior of "explaining" cannot succeed if teachers do not adequately understand the content they are supposed to explain. Various other researchers also found the same, where they highlighted that lack of subject knowledge as a key problem., which affected the student achievement as well as hinders the competency of being an effective teacher (Akyeampong, 2003; Pryor et al., 2012, Bhattacharjea et al., 2011). Justice Verma committee report (2012) also mentioned that the teacher education programme (B.Ed.) does not adequately engage with subject knowledge (p.23). Besides, the poor results of Teacher Eligibility Test (instituted in 2011 as essential criterion for teacher recruitment over and above a professional degree in teacher education) over the years also demonstrated that the bulk of candidates who took the TET did not qualify it, which reflected the poor subject knowledge of teachers. The concern for lack of required subject mastery among teacher trainees has also taken up in NCFTE, (2010), "it is assumed that teacher trainees have the subject-content knowledge which they would draw upon when required. Hence, teacher education curricula do not engage teacher trainees with subject-content. However, if we want to prepare teachers to present subject-content in developmentally appropriate ways and with critical perspectives it is essential that several theoretical concepts learnt during general education in school and college be revisited and reconstructed" (p.44).

Regarding pedagogic awareness, the results were most discouraging as more than 80% of the trainees were not able to score even the pass percentage. The teacher education aims at training the trainees to become future teachers, if the results of the pedagogy tests are so poor, the quality of training is highly questioned. Various researchers (Dembele, 2005; Pryor et al., 2012 etc) also reported the poor pedagogical practice being adopted by the initial teacher education courses, where the standard traditional practices are being followed and taught to the trainees during the course. Besides, teachers' attitude towards the subject and student is significant in creating desire to learn in the students (Bozdogan et al, 2007); but the results of present study revealed lack of favourable attitude of among most of the trainees towards teaching and student teacher relationship, thus such trainees i.e. prospective teachers may not prove to be as effective teachers.

Conclusion

The weak relationship between present teacher education and school education can be made stronger either by bringing a change in the curriculum of teacher

educators or by changing the mode of transaction adopted by teacher educators for present teacher education (Pandey, 2011). In order to achieve the intended quality of teacher education course, it is imperative to now put constant efforts on the anvil of implementation of the strategies and recommendations suggested by various researchers and the documents (NCFTE 2010) which could bring some discernible change in the content and process of teacher education. The role expectation to produce an effective teacher should not be taken as rhetoric but as a goal to be constantly striven for, the urgency is to address the training institutes seriously to examining the issues related to the preparation of teachers as well as to prune the theory and practice of teacher education. Effective teacher education curriculum calls for inclusion of relevant contents and practices which can infuse confidence among the prospective teachers to negotiate the school curriculum in classroom.

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