

EFFECT OF SOFT SKILLS TRAINING ON TEACHING COMPETENCY OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS

ABSTRACT

Aims : The present Study examine the effect of Soft Skills training on Teaching Competency of Prospective Teachers by administering pre and post test

Study Design: Within the framework of quasi-experimental research, the present study has utilized the experimental method and the one-group pre-test post-test design for the experiment.

Place and Duration of Study: 90 prospective teachers who were enrolled in a two-year teacher training program (B.Ed.) at three of the training colleges of Bndelkhand University in Jhansi, India, during the academic year 2022–2023 made up the sample size.

Methodology: Before the Soft Skills training is administered, the participants' Teaching Competency is measured using appropriate assessment tools. The Soft Skills training is provided to the selected group of prospective teachers. After the Soft Skills training has been completed, the participants' Teaching Competency is measured again using the same assessment tools. The changes in the participants' competencies from the pre-test to the post-test are analyzed statistically by paired sample t-test.

Results: The intervention or training in soft skills appears to have had a very significant impact on teaching competency, according to the results. The results highlight the value of including soft skills in teacher preparation programs to provide educators the interpersonal and emotional intelligence needed for effective teaching.

Key Words –*Soft Skills, Teaching Competency, Prospective Teachers*

1. INTRODUCTION

The goal of teacher education is to create educators who are professional competent and whose responsibilities go beyond merely imparting knowledge. They must be highly qualified professionals with strong intellectual, pedagogical, and practical skills. Every

professional's success rests in large part on having current professional knowledge, devotion, and dedication in addition to efficiency and effectiveness. The focus of teacher education is on helping students develop the specialized information, attitude, abilities, and behavioral patterns needed to do their jobs well. Therefore, secondary teacher education should foster the soft qualities that a future teacher needs to become a superb professional educator. Students pursuing secondary teacher education thrive in their soft skill demonstrations, which enhance their teaching abilities.

Soft skills are "the abilities, skills, and traits that pertain to personality, attitude, and behavior rather than to formal or technical knowledge" (Fleischer & Dressner, 2002). The human and people skills, often known as soft skills, are a complement to hard skills. Interpersonal and human relation skills are what they are. In the teaching and learning process of the twenty-first century, the teachers' soft skills and instructional competence are crucial. Therefore, the research issue is quite important in the current environment.

"Soft Skills" are "People Skills" comprising of one's attributes that drive one's potential for sustained growth. According to WHO Soft Skills are defined as "Psychological Skills, which insists upon accepting the behaviours of others along with their nature". It is also defined as "key for success". Soft Skills are termed as Critical thinking skills, Decision making skills, Problem solving skills, Communication skills, Empathy, Coping with emotions, Handling peer pressure in right direction, and Negotiation Skills. In today's educational scenario values are deteriorating day by day. Without the educational values the educational institutions are merely a building with laboratories, libraries and classrooms. When schools with the teachers of well equipped soft skills join its hands in imparting the lost Indian values in future then schools will become a place of producing intellectual work, generating habits of systematic thinking, readiness for self examination. Hence a continuous renewal of soft skills through teaching and training is a must.

2.NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Among all occupations, teaching is the most honorable. It is a career that shapes the minds of tomorrow. It gives the children the tools they need to survive. Teaching is a challenging job that calls for the capacity to comprehend, communicate, inspire, and motivate pupils as well as develop their values, intelligence, enthusiasm, friendliness, personalities, sense of humor, and empathy. The learner-centered approach to teaching has replaced the teacher-centered approach. They are no longer the teacher or the fount of all information; they are now a facilitator. The instructor aids the pupils in acquiring the knowledge they need, as well as the skills, values, attitudes, and routines they'll need to survive in the world of tomorrow. Only when soft skills and teaching proficiency are present and used in the classroom can the interactional and interpretive process of teaching and learning become meaningful and successful. Soft skills play a crucial role in the teaching competency of prospective teachers. While subject knowledge is undoubtedly important, soft skills enhance the overall effectiveness of teaching and contribute significantly to creating a positive learning environment. Thus, a teacher's soft skills are crucial to their ability to impart knowledge in the classroom. Investigating the Soft Skills about Teaching Competency of Prospective Teachers is the study's main problem.

3.REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

MandeepKaur and ArtiTalwar (2014) study was designed "to examine the relationship between teaching competency and emotional intelligence of secondary school teachers. The findings of the study reveal a significant positive relationship between teachers' teaching

competency and their emotional intelligence". Nidhi Kakkar (2014) examined "the Teaching Competency of Teacher-Trainees in Relation to their Emotional Intelligence. The findings of present research revealed perfect positive relationship between the emotional intelligence and teaching competency of teacher-trainees whereas sex factor has no impact on the level of emotional intelligence".

Sasipriya and Annaraja (2017) studied "the relationship between the performance in soft skills and teaching competency of secondary teacher education students. The sample consists of 1287 secondary teacher education students. The investigators developed two tools for collecting data namely Soft skill inventory and Teaching competency scale (2009). Significant relationship between the performance in soft skills of secondary teacher education students and their teaching competency is found significant".

In a research, Bozğun and Pekdoğan (2018) concluded that "pre-service teachers differ in their social skills regarding such variables as gender, department, seniority and family income. The researchers reported that male students, students studying science teaching and classroom teaching, and those in their third year have higher social skills than female students, students who study pre-school teaching, psychological counselling and guidance, and second year students, respectively".

Ngang et al. (2015) attempted "to identify critical issues in soft skills development through teaching professional training and found that larger class sizes, being too academically focused, and insufficient period of training lead to failure in soft skills development. As a solution, the researchers proposed the use of an embedded model to ensure integration of soft skills in every course design".

Balakrishan and Anbuthasan (2016) noted that "the rural and urban teachers differ significantly in their team-building skills and that state and private school teachers differ significantly in oral communication, computer skills, organisational ability, leadership and team-building skills". Lavilles and Robles (2017) indicated "a significant relationship between teachers' soft skills proficiency level and school performance in the Philippines".

Likewise, Romero-Cobeña (2019) evaluated "the soft skills of teachers in Ecuador and concluded that teachers play important roles as trainers of people and always maintain good management in the quality of education provided within the educational unit". Peabody (2019) stated that "school administrators interpreted soft skills as being the decisive factor in effective teaching and that they shared the importance of teachers building connections with their students through their positive relationships, which included the ability to recognise, understand, and manage their emotions and the students' emotions for the benefit of student learning". In a quantitative research conducted in Peru, Guzmán-Britto (2019) found "significant differences between the soft skills of teachers in public educational institutions". De Paniza (2019) conducted "a project on the development of soft skills of teachers and teaching directors in Colombia and recommended the integration of a subject on soft skills from preschool to high school curricula". Similarly, Streltsova and Ivanova (2020) underlined "the need for purposeful work on the development of soft skills of teachers in Russia". Kateryna Kolesnik et al. (2023) studied "future-teacher soft skills development in the context of Ukraine's entry into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The results of the experiment show that a 0% indicator for unsatisfactory level of soft skills development was achieved. The guarantor of success in the soft skills development program is the conscious and cohesive work of the teaching staff, as well as an environment of cooperation with motivated students".

4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

To Study the effect of Soft Skills training on Teaching Competency of Prospective Teachers

5. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To Study the effect of Soft Skills training on Teaching Competency of Prospective Teachers by administering pre and post test

6.HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

There is no significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post-test of Teaching Competency of Prospective Teachers

7.METHODOLOGY

The investigator has adopted the experimental method as the method of studying the effectiveness of Soft Skills training on Teaching Competency of Prospective Teachers. In the experimental method the investigator has adopted the *one-group pre-test post-test design within the realm of quasi-experimental research* for the experiment. Here's a brief explanation of this experimental design :

Selection of Participants : Size of the sample consisted of 90 prospective teachers pursuing two year teacher's training programme (B.Ed.) under various colleges of Bndelkhand University, Jhansi. The prospective teachers who will participate in the study are selected based on certain criteria, such as their willingness to take part in the training and their availability for the duration of the study.

Pre-Test Measurement : Before the Soft Skills training is administered, the participants' Teaching Competency is measured using appropriate assessment tools. This initial measurement is referred to as the "pre-test." It establishes a baseline of the participants' competencies before any intervention (Soft Skills training) takes place.

Intervention (Soft Skills training) : The Soft Skills training is provided to the selected group of prospective teachers. This training is designed to enhance their teaching skills, emotional understanding, and social interactions.

Post-Test Measurement : After the Soft Skills training has been completed, the participants' Teaching Competency is measured again using the same assessment tools that were used in the pre-test. This measurement is referred to as the "post-test."

Data Analysis : The changes in the participants' competencies from the pre-test to the post-test are analyzed statistically by paired sample t-test. This analysis aims to determine whether any improvements in Teaching Competency have occurred as a result of the Soft Skills training.

8. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The testing of this hypothesis has been done by comparing the mean scores of pre and post-test of Teaching Competency of Prospective Teachers. The data was analyzed with the help of paired t-test. The results are given in table-1 to 3.

Table -1
Paired Samples Statistics for Pre and Post Test of Teaching Competency

Variable	Paired Sample Statistics			
Teaching Competency	N	Mean	SD	Standard Error
Pre Test	90	102.356	7.558	0.797

Post Test	90	107.367	7.571	0.798
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Table - 2
Paired Sample t-Test for Pre and Post Test of Teaching Competency

Variable	Paired Differences			Paired Sample Test			Effect Sizes
	Mean	SD	Standard Error	T	df	p	Cohen's d
Teaching Competency							
Pre Test	5.011	2.700	0.285	17.605	89	<.01	2.700
Post Test							

Table - 3
Paired Samples Correlation between Pre and Post test of Teaching Competency

Variable	Paired Sample Correlation		
Teaching Competency	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pre Test	90	0.936	< .01
Post Test	90		

8.1 Interpretation of the Mean Values :

The paired samples statistics for a pre-test and post-test comparison of teaching competency scores are shown in table-1. The mean score of Teaching Competency for the pre-test is 102.356, while the mean score for the post-test is 107.367.

Mean Pre-Test Score (102.356) : This represents the average teaching competency score of the prospective teachers before any Soft Skills intervention or training.

Mean Post-Test Score (107.367) : This represents the average teaching competency score of the same participants after they have undergone a Soft Skills training.

The increase in the mean score from the pre-test to the post-test, from 102.356 to 107.367, it appears that, on average, participants' teaching competency improved after the Soft Skills training. The increase of about 5 points suggests a positive change in their teaching skills or competency. A paired t-test was used to determine whether this increase is statistically significant.

8.2 Interpretation of t-Value :

Paired sample t-test is a statistical test used to compare the means of two related groups. In this case, the test is applied to compare the means of pre-test and post-test scores of teaching competency. The obtained t-test statistic is 17.205, and the degrees of freedom (df) are 89. It's clear that the difference between the means of the pre-test and post-test scores is quite substantial. A t-test statistic of this magnitude is indicative of a highly significant difference between the two groups.

Since the t-test statistic is so large and the degrees of freedom are relatively high, it strongly suggests that the observed difference between the pre-test and post-test scores is not due to random variation. This result supports the idea that the soft skills training had a substantial and statistically significant impact on the teaching competency of prospective teachers.

8.3 Interpretation of Correlation Value :

Table - 3 reveals a paired samples coefficient of correlation between the pre and post test scores of teaching competency. The calculated values of paired samples correlation is 0.936, indicates a very strong positive relationship between the two sets of scores. Correlation measures the degree of association or linear relationship between two variables. In this context, the correlation coefficient of 0.936 suggests that there is a highly consistent and strong connection between the participants' pre-test and post-test scores.

The fact that the correlation is 0.936 indicates that participants who scored higher on the pre-test tended to also score higher on the post-test, and those who scored lower on the pre-test tended to score lower on the post-test. This strong correlation suggests that the participants' performance on the pre-test is highly predictive of their performance on the post-test.

8.4 Interpretation of Cohen 'd' :

An obtained Cohen's d effect size of 2.7 for a paired sample t-test comparing pre and post test scores of teaching competency is an extremely large effect size. Cohen's d is a measure of the standardized difference between two means, indicating the magnitude of the effect.

In general, Cohen's d effect sizes can be interpreted as follows:

Small Effect Size : Around 0.2
Medium Effect Size : Around 0.5
Large Effect Size : Around 0.8

A Cohen's d effect size of 2.7 is well beyond the range of what is typically considered large. This suggests that the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of teaching competency is not only statistically significant but also practically and substantively significant. It indicates an extremely substantial change in teaching competency as a result of the intervention or training of Soft Skills.

An effect size of this magnitude implies that the training of soft skills had a transformative impact on the participants' teaching competency, leading to a dramatic improvement in their skills or knowledge.

Such a significant effect size could have significant implications for educational practice and policy, potentially indicating the effectiveness of the soft skills intervention in a powerful and tangible way.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research provides empirical evidence of the positive impact of soft skill training on the teaching competency of prospective teachers. The findings underscore the importance of incorporating soft skills into teacher education programs to equip educators with the interpersonal and emotional intelligence required for effective teaching. As the educational landscape evolves, nurturing both technical and soft skills will be pivotal in shaping competent and empathetic educators who can inspire and empower the next generation of learners.

Above findings may be supported with that of Ağçam, Reyhan; Dogan, Adem (2021), Kasim, Usman; Muslem, Asnawi; Mustafa, Faisal (2022) and Bhatnagar, Ruchi and Many, Joyce (2022) who came out with the conclusion that Soft skills significantly affect teaching competency.

9.RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Teacher education programs should integrate dedicated soft skills training modules into their curriculum.
2. Conduct longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of soft skills training on the teaching competency of prospective teachers. Students at education colleges should receive soft skills training.
3. Recognize that prospective teachers may have varying levels of baseline teaching competency. Design training programs that cater to these differences and offer tailored guidance to help each individual teacher-in-training improve their specific areas of weakness.
4. Collaborate with schools and educational institutions to provide opportunities for practical application of soft skills training in real classroom settings.
5. Different soft skill dimensions should be used to build teaching methodologies.
6. To raise the bar for soft skills, educational institutions should host workshops and seminars on personality development programs.
7. Workshops on stress reduction and time management can be held.
8. Prospective teachers can improve a variety of soft skills through ongoing training.
9. Through academic activities in their course, female secondary teacher education students should be exposed to greater social situations.
10. To help students acquire successful teaching techniques, teaching practice should be well planned and supervised.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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