



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Education

A STUDY ON ACQUISITION OF SOFT SKILLS IN RELATION TO THEIR TEACHING COMPETENCE OF STUDENT TEACHERS

KEY WORDS:

Vasundhara Sreenivasula

Lecturer St.Alphonsas College of Education

ABSTRACT

It is a teachers' responsibility to create a conducive environment of learning and maintain a positive culture in the classroom for students to learn. A student teacher well acquired with essential soft skills will exhibit excellent traits of a good teacher. Student teachers, when entering in the practical world or join schools to teach, face many challenges, and find it tough to deal with them. Currently, most of the teachers teaching in different schools lack soft skills. Since there is a dire need of competent teachers, so it has become important to ensure that whether student teachers are equipped with soft skills and how it impacts their teaching performance. Student teachers should possess soft skills as it has a direct correlation with the teachers' performance. Therefore, the problem lies in ensuring that these student teachers possess soft skills and whether it impacts their teaching competence. The present research study will provide an empirical evidence which can be utilized by the stakeholders to imbibe those skills in the teacher training curriculum. The predictive ability of soft skills in terms of teaching competence of the prospective teachers can be inferred through this piece of research work. The findings and practical implications of this study will pave ways for more inductive researches in the field of soft skills needed by the teachers. There are the rare shreds of evidence of empirical studies done in the country with the present set of soft skills investigating their impact on teaching competence. The findings of this study may fill a portion of the existing gap in this area in India as majority of the empirical evidence can be witnessed in the foreign context.

1.1 Introduction

Soft Skills—An Overview

Soft skills is a trendy term nowadays. It represents personal transversal competencies such as communication capability, social aptitude, friendliness, ability to work with a team (Cimatti, 2016), mentor people, being positive and other personality traits that characterize relationships between people. Soft skills are traditionally considered complementary of hard skills or technical skills. Soft skills are the relevant cross-disciplinary aspect.

Various names have been suggested for soft skills till the day by several institutions and organizations, including World Health Organization (WHO), European Union (EU), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Hard Skills are also called 'Specific Competencies', and soft skills are often indicated as Generic Competencies (Poblete Ruiz, 2015). The term cross-cultural competencies appeared in Europe 20 years ago. Now expressions such as Key Competences and, after Microsoft-Intel definition, 21st Century Skills is also prevalent (Hautamaki, 2015).

1.2 Teacher Specific Soft Skills

As the review suggests, the concept of soft skills was known by the researchers and employers because of the interest and need at the workplaces. However, there is an absence of finite definitions or taxonomies of discrete soft skills which makes it challenging for the idea of soft skills to truly gain traction in research and practice (Matteson, Anderson, & Boyden, 2016). Based on literature review, several elements of soft skills were considered crucial for teachers in teaching effectively to their students. Collaboration, positiveness, mentoring, teamwork, timekeeping, and leadership skills are a few soft skills which are added ingredients in teaching, and they contribute to the personality of the teacher as well.

1) Collaboration

Collaboration requires a complex range of interactions with individuals. It includes the ability to interact well, get a consensus over a matter. Being both a good listener and speaker helps a teacher to collaborate effectively with the authorities, colleagues, and students. The collaboration combines physical output and mental processes promoting active participation, which enhances the connectivity of an individual with the fellow beings focusing on shared goals

(Greenberg & Nilssen, 2015).

2) Positiveness

Positiveness contains enthusiasm, graciousness, benignity, and optimism in the individual, which are essential for future success. It affects the personality and behavior of the person and spreads positive vibes to the surrounding people. A teacher should be able to take the initiative, handle positive criticism, and try to bring changes in his / her attitude accordingly. 3) Mentoring

3) An ability to serve as a wise person, advisor, and trusted counselor. It is semi-structured guidance whereby one person shares his/her knowledge, skills, and experience to assist others in progressing in their own lives and careers. Along with being an excellent teacher, he/she is also supposed to fill the role of a mentor for students. A mentor needs to be easily accessible and prepared to offer help as the need arises.

4) Teamwork

Teamwork involves the ability to perform in groups through cooperation. It is the capability of an individual to get along with people coming from various cultural and social backgrounds to realize a shared goal. A teacher is required to possess a good working relationship with his or her colleagues. It is essential for them to be respectful towards each other's attitude and beliefs and remain open for healthy discussion for the betterment of the students.

5) Timekeeping

It is an ability to prioritize task as per the institutional needs or the task-based needs and execute it accordingly. Being multi-tasking, creating a plan of action, and reviewing the progress of the task carefully with the timeline are some of the significant characteristics of an excellent timekeeper. A teacher should be acquainted with these characteristics in order to perform his/her duties effectively.

6) Leadership

Leadership refers to the readiness or ability to engage with people to persuade, inspire, guide, direct, or manage others (Murnane & Levy 1996). It seeks self-confidence to be a leader. It is demanded by a teacher to understand the role and responsibility of a leader and a group member and be able to

carry out both the roles interchangeably according to the situational needs.

1.3 Teacher Competencies

The term "Teaching Competency" was defined by various authors as mere teachers' effect on pupil outcomes. Some authors accounted for it as knowledge, attitude, skill, and other teacher characteristics (Haskew, 1956). Few other authors perceived teaching competence as teachers' behavior that produces intended effects (Medley & Mitzel, 1963; Biddel, 1964). Mathew (1980) defined teaching competency more comprehensively as the capability of a teacher evidenced through a set of overt behaviors resulting to the interaction between the presage and the product variables of teaching within a classroom or social setting. In simple words teaching competency can be stated as the adequate performance of the observable teacher behaviors that bring about desired pupil outcome.

There lies an abundance of literature to put across that school teacher have a direct impact on the students' achievement. Several research findings had revealed that how teachers teaching behaviors and interactions with the student is a cornerstone in the competent teaching and effective output. A summary of useable studies accumulated over the years has put forth practical strategies, and teacher competencies that enable them to teach effectively. Jackson (1990) postulated that competencies are the skills and knowledge that enables a teacher to be successful. These competencies help to maximize learning by learners, and a teacher must have expertise in an ambit of competencies in a complex environment where he needs to make several situational decisions each day. Three groupings of these competencies can help simplify and organize what is needed to master to maximize their performance: instructional delivery, classroom management, and formative assessment. These three categories provide the essential core around which decision-makers can construct plans for teacher preparation, their development, and their evaluation. A profile of exemplary classroom instruction derived from effectiveness research can be built (Wenglinsky, 2002; Hattie, 2009). Scrutiny of research on teaching practices reveals that four classes of competencies yield the most significant results.

1.4 Need of the Study

In evident from the literature review that very few pieces of research have been done in this area. The studies which were previously conducted considered a different set of soft skills. The combination of a set of soft skills considered in this study by the researcher has never been investigated before in the country in a similar context. No attempt has been made to study the current set of soft skills used in this study to see its impact on the teaching competence of the student teachers. The researcher was explicitly interested in the target population of student teachers as they were in the process of becoming future teachers, who will step into the practical teaching environment. This study is novel in itself as it will find out the impact of collaboration, positiveness, mentoring, teamwork, timekeeping, and leadership skills on the teaching competence of student teachers. The present research study will provide an empirical evidence which can be utilized by the stake holders to imbibe those skills in the teacher training curriculum. This study will stress out the significant contribution of studied set of skills in enhancing the teaching competence of student teachers. The predictive ability of soft skills in terms of teaching competence of the prospective teachers can be inferred through this piece of research work. The findings and practical implications of this study will pave ways for more inductive researches in the field of soft skills needed by the teachers.

1.5 Operational Definitions

Soft Skills – Soft skills are the general skills or innate traits possessed by the teachers which signify their potential to

collaborate, to mentor, to exhibit leadership qualities, to work with a team, to prioritize tasks according to time and to be positive in the work environment. The set of soft skills considered in this research were collaboration, positiveness, mentoring, teamwork, timekeeping, and leadership.

Teaching Competence – Teaching competence here refers to the execution of mastery level teaching with the possession of a set of competencies like- presentation skill, evaluation skill, subject knowledge, planning skill, motivation skills, and classroom management skills by student teachers.

student teachers- student teachers, refer to the prospective school teachers enrolled in the B.Ed. Colleges or teacher training institutes.

1.6 Variables Under Study

Independent Variable - Soft skill and its dimensions (collaboration, positiveness, mentoring, teamwork, timekeeping and leadership)

Dependent Variable -Teaching Competence

1.7 Objectives:

1. To study the level of Teaching Competence among student teachers.
2. To study the level of soft skills among student teachers.
3. To examine the relationship between the composite soft skills acquired by student teachers and its components with the teaching competence of student teachers.

1.8 Hypothesis

- 1) The level of teaching competence among student teachers will vary.
- 2) The level of soft skills among student teachers of entire sample will vary.
- 3) There will be no significant relationship between dimensions of soft skills with teaching competence.

1.9 Sample of the Study

Stratified random sample was employed for the collecting the data from student teachers of private colleges of education . The data was collected from 100 student teachers belonging to two private colleges of education at Hyderabad in Telangana State.

1.9 Tools

Soft Skill Scale (SSS) and Teaching Competence Scale

1.10 Hypothesis Testing:

Hypothesis 1: Level of Acquisition of Soft skills by student teachers

The responses of the sample on the Acquisition of soft skills was collected and it was grouped into three viz., High Acquisition student teachers, average Acquisition student teachers and low Acquisition student teachers .The high Acquisition student teachers are those student teachers who are above mean plus 1 sigma score, and those average student teachers group is those student teachers fallen between the mean minus sigma to mean plus sigma, and the low Acquisition group is those student teachers who are below the mean minus one sigma score. The results are given in table 1

Table 1: Showing Acquisition of soft skills of the student teachers group

Mean- 1 sigma (Low favourable Acquisition group)	4(4%)
-1 Sigma to+ 1sigma (Average Acquisition group)	80(80%)
Mean +1 sigma (Highly favourable Acquisition group)	16(16%)

From the above table it could be observed that on an average

80% have positive Acquisition, 16% have high Acquisition and 4% have low Acquisition about the usage of soft skills in the teacher education. Only less number of student teachers has low favourable Acquisition towards the soft skills in the teacher education.

Hypothesis 2: Level of Teacher competences by student teachers

The responses of the sample on the teaching competences of student teachers was collected and it was grouped into three viz., High level teaching competences of student teachers, average teaching competences of student teachers and low level teaching competences of student teachers. The high teaching competences teachers are those student teachers who are above mean plus 1 sigma score, and those average teaching competences of student teachers group is those student teachers fallen between the mean minus sigma to mean plus sigma, and the low level teaching competences of student teachers group is those student teachers who are below the mean minus one sigma score. The results are given in table 2

Table 2: Showing teaching competences of the groups

Mean- 1 sigma (Low favorable teaching competences group)	22.08%
-1 Sigma to + 1sigma (Average teaching competences group)	66.62 %)
Mean +1 sigma (Highly favorable teaching competences group)	11.30%

Majority of student teachers that is 66.62% of student teachers possess average level of teaching competence. It is also seen that merely 11.30% of Student teachers possess high Teaching competence. 22.08% of Student teachers are found to possess low level of teaching competence.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between Acquisition of soft skills and Teaching competence of Student Teachers

Table 4: Showing the results of 'r' between the Acquisition of soft skills and Teaching Competence.

Sl.No	Name of the Variable	Category	N	R	Signi
1	Overall	SS vs TC	100	0.19	*

NS-Non Significant, *Significant at 0.05 level

Table results indicate that there is average positive relationship between the soft skill & teaching Competence and the value is significant at 0.05 levels. Also there is positive relationship between the soft skill & teaching Competence of the student teachers

1.11 Findings of the Study

The major findings that emerged out of the present study are presented below

1. Majority of student teachers that is 66.62% of student teachers possess average level of teaching competence. It is also seen that merely 11.30% of Student teachers possess high Teaching competence. 22.08% of Student teachers are found to possess low level of teaching competence.

2. There is average positive relationship between the Attitude towards the teaching profession & teaching Competence and the value is significant at 0.05 levels. Also there is positive relationship between the Attitude towards the teaching profession & teaching Competence of the student teachers with respect gender and methodology and it could not bring significant at any levels.

3. 80 % of the student teachers has average Acquisition about

the Acquisition of soft skills in teacher education, 4% has low Acquisition and 16% has high Acquisition about the Acquisition of soft skills in teacher education.

4. There is positive relationship between the soft skill & teaching Competence of the student teachers

1.12 Conclusion

The level of soft skills acquired by the teacher trainees varies and majority of them acquire an average level of soft skills. Similarly, in the case of teaching competence a majority of teacher trainees possessed an average level of teaching competence. A remarkable amount of variation was noted in the level of soft skills and teaching competence of Soft skills are strongly, positively related to the teaching competency of teacher trainees. The dimensions of soft skills - collaboration, positiveness, mentoring, teamwork, timekeeping and leadership are positively related to the teaching competence.

1.13 Educational Implication

The present findings would invite the attention of National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) and teacher training institutes towards soft skills and its linkage with the production of competent teachers which may adhere to the needs of the current generation school children. This study would give an understanding of different predictors of teaching competence and would help the teacher training institutions to deepen their perception for soft skills and take steps to organize several workshops and soft skills enhancement programs to suit the needs. The concept of soft skills has emerged recently in teacher education with an increasing frequency. Especially in Indian context, it is an emerging paradigm of investigation. Since, it is a developing area of enquiry, so this research will make a significant contribution in the literature.

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