



SOCIAL COMPETENCE OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS – AN IMPERATIVE SKILL FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT:

Teachers with high levels of social competence are better able to develop and manage nurturing relationships with their students, manage behavior in their classrooms, serve as behavioral role models for children and regulate their own emotions, protecting themselves and their students from burnout. This study is an attempt to study the social competence of prospective teachers who are the future teachers responsible for creating a better citizens of the society. The study revealed that the social competence of prospective teachers was average, hence suggested a few measures to develop the social competence of prospective teachers to enhance effective teaching.

KEYWORDS:

SOCIAL COMPETENCE, PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS, EFFECTIVE TEACHING, IMPERATIVE.

INTRODUCTION

It is a common saying that man is a social being. He cannot live alone. He needs to live in a society. In order to live and cope up with the other members of the society he has to be socially competent. Social Competence is usually acquired in the family. Educational institutions takes the second place in the development of social competence of students. Social competence is a summative judgment of one's ability to use these skills when contextually appropriate (Gresham, 1986). During the initial stages of life, parents play an important role in providing social and emotional support to their children, but as they grow the peers enter their lives and start playing a significant role in their social-emotional development and slowly and steadily the peers become their preferred companions rather than their parents, who provide important sources of entertainment and support to them. When the children start interacting with their peers they assume different roles and start understanding the society and it's culture. This relationship with the peers develops more intimacy than with their parents or adults thus developing social competencies like cooperation and negotiation.

Social competence (SC) is one of the most important competences required for successful performance of the teaching profession. Strengthening students' social and emotional competences provides aid and support for lifelong learning and social and emotional implementation of the teaching process. Social competencies of students are critical to learning and achievement, but the social competence of their teachers are very important to create an effective classroom climate which is crucial for ensuring effective learning. Social competence is one of the most important competencies required for successful performance of the teaching profession. Teachers with

high levels of social competence are better able to develop and manage nurturing relationships with their students, manage behavior in their classrooms, serve as behavioral role models for children and regulate their own emotions, protecting themselves and their students from the "burnout cascade." This paper is an attempt to study the social competence of prospective teachers who are the future teachers responsible for creating a better citizens of the society.

ROLE OF SOCIAL COMPETENCE FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING

Teachers need social competence for facilitating the students in achieving their goals. Effectiveness of teaching is not dependent on technicality but on the method adopted by the teacher while teaching to the students. Teaching is generally considered as only fifty percent knowledge and fifty percent of social skills similarly to become effective teachers, in addition to possessing a good knowledge, a teacher should have a good social competence. Teachers with high social competence can help students in their academic and as well as their social achievements. Besides making the student proficient in academics, a teacher has the responsibility to practically prepare the students to cope with all type of situations. It also comes under the responsibilities of teacher to behave as role model to the students (Honby, 2006).

An effective teacher must be ever mindful of the simple fact that children go to school for a living. School is their job, their livelihood, their identity. Therefore, the critical role that school plays in the child's social development and self-concept must be recognized. Even if a child is enjoying academic success in the classroom, his attitude about school will be determined by the degree of social success

that he experiences. Only a teacher with high social competence can help students in their social and emotional development.

There is much that the teacher can do to foster and promote social development in the student.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Social competence is a complex, multidimensional construct consisting of social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural skills, as well as motivational and expectancy sets needed for successful social adaptation. It has been broadly acknowledged that the role of social skills and social competence is that of a protective factor for the academic success and predicting positive developmental outcomes. The world today has become very materialistic. Everyone today are involved in a rat race to earn more and more due to which all are striving hard for power. The students are competing for superiority. Socially and emotionally competent teachers know how to manage their emotions and their behaviour and also how to manage relationships with others. They can manage their behaviour even when emotionally aroused by challenging situations. They can regulate their emotions in healthy ways that facilitate positive classroom outcomes without compromising their health. Social and Emotional Competency is associated with well-being. When teachers experience mastery over these social and emotional challenges, teaching becomes more enjoyable, and they feel more efficacious. Given the lack of explicit pre-service or in-service training aimed at teachers' personal development, the current educational system appears to assume that teachers have the requisite social and emotional competency to create a warm and nurturing learning environment, be emotionally responsive to students, form supportive and collaborative relationships with demanding parents, effectively manage the growing demands imposed by standardized testing, model exemplary emotion regulation, and effectively handle the challenging behaviours of disruptive students. Because social and emotional competency is context dependent, an individual may function in a high level in one context but need training and/or experience to adapt to another. For example, an individual who manages his or her social and emotional life well in a work domain where he or she interacts with adults in predictable ways may not necessarily have the competency to function well in a classroom full of energetic young children without additional training or support. Given the very high demands placed on teachers, it is surprising that they rarely receive specific training to address the importance of social and emotional issues in the classroom or how to develop the social and emotional competency to successfully handle them (Hargreaves, 1998). Although a great deal of attention has spotlighted students' development, there has been little focus on teachers own development despite evidence that teachers make

important contributions to desirable classroom and student outcomes. When teachers lack the social and emotional competency to handle classroom challenges, they experience emotional stress. High levels of emotional stress can have an adverse effect on job performance thereby deteriorating the quality of education. Thus the role of social competence is very vital to ensure successful teaching and learning. Hence this study was an attempt to know about the social competence of prospective teachers and suggest a few measures that would help the development of the same.

METHODOLOGY

To find out the social competence of prospective teachers, the investigator employed survey method and prepared a questionnaire to collect the necessary data.

Objectives

1. To find out the level of social competence of prospective teachers.
2. To find out if there exists any significant difference in the social competence of prospective teachers based on their locality, subject and degree of graduation.

HYPOTHESES

1. There is no significant difference in the social competence of prospective teachers based on their locality
2. There is no significant difference in the social competence of prospective teachers based on their subject
3. There is no significant difference in the social competence of prospective teachers based on their degree of graduation

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population taken for the survey was prospective teachers. A sample of 100 prospective teachers were chosen randomly from Annammal College of Education for Women, Thoothukudi, affiliated to TamilNadu Teachers Education University, Chennai. After getting consent and giving sufficient instruction on the survey the tool was administered on them.

TOOL USED

The investigator prepared a questionnaire to assess the social competence of prospective teachers based on the social competence scale prepared by Prof. K.C. Vashistha and Radhika Agarwal. The questionnaire consisted of 20 items. The items of the scale carry a 5-point range of responses, as follows: strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree. The scale is rated based on how the subject has felt over each statement.

ANALYSIS

TABLE NO. 1

PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS SHOWING THE LEVEL OF SOCIAL COMPETENCE OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS

| VARIABLE | | SOCIAL COMPETENCE OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS | | | | | |
|----------------------|---------|---|----|---------|----|------|----|
| | | LOW | | AVERAGE | | HIGH | |
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| LOCALITY | RURAL | 9 | 18 | 25 | 50 | 16 | 32 |
| | URBAN | 19 | 38 | 24 | 48 | 7 | 14 |
| SUBJECT | ARTS | 18 | 33 | 26 | 48 | 11 | 19 |
| | SCIENCE | 12 | 27 | 20 | 44 | 13 | 29 |
| DEGREE OF GRADUATION | UG | 20 | 32 | 25 | 40 | 18 | 28 |
| | PG | 9 | 25 | 17 | 46 | 11 | 29 |

From table 1 it is revealed that

- 18%, 50% and 16% of prospective teachers from rural area have low, average and high level of social competence respectively and 38%, 40% and 14% of prospective teachers from urban area have low, average and high level of social competence respectively.
- 33%, 48% and 19% of arts discipline prospective teachers have low, average and high level of social competence respectively and 27%, 44% and 29%

of science discipline prospective teachers have low, average and high level of social competence respectively.

- 32%, 40% and 28% of prospective teachers with under graduate degree have low, average and high level of social competence respectively and 25%, 46% and 29% of prospective teachers with post graduate degree have low, average and high level of social competence respectively.

TABLE NO. 2

TEST OF SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN THE SOCIAL COMPETENCE OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS BASED ON THEIR LOCALITY, SUBJECT AND DEGREE OF GRADUATION

| VARIABLE | | NUMBER | MEAN | SD | CALCULATED T VALUE | TABLE VALUE | REMARKS AT 5% LEVEL |
|----------------------|---------|--------|-------|-------|--------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| LOCALITY | RURAL | 50 | 63.15 | 12.76 | 4.32 | 1.96 | SIGNIFICANT |
| | URBAN | 50 | 46.61 | 9.95 | | | |
| SUBJECT | ARTS | 55 | 50.58 | 12.46 | 0.62 | 1.96 | NOT SIGNIFICANT |
| | SCIENCE | 45 | 53.58 | 14.19 | | | |
| DEGREE OF GRADUATION | UG | 63 | 54.77 | 11.19 | 0.72 | 1.96 | NOT SIGNIFICANT |
| | PG | 37 | 51.35 | 14.79 | | | |

From table 2 it is inferred that there is significant difference in the social competence of prospective teachers based on their locality. By comparing their mean scores it is found that the prospective teachers from rural area are found to be more socially competent than the prospective

teachers from urban area. It is also revealed that there is no significant difference in the social competence of prospective teachers based on their subject and degree of graduation.

TABLE NO. 3

ITEM WISE PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS OF THE RESPONSES OF SELECTED ITEMS

| S.NO. | ITEMS | STRONGLY AGREE | AGREE | UNDECIDED | DISAGREE | STRONGLY DISAGREE |
|-------|---|----------------|-------|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| 1. | IT IS HARD FOR ME TO GET ALONG WELL WITH OTHERS | 17% | 25% | 16% | 24% | 18% |

| | | | | | | |
|----|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 2. | I ENJOY MAKING FUN OF OTHERS | 35% | 6% | 16% | 21% | 22% |
| 3. | I AM HAPPY TO WORK ON MY OWN RATHER THAN A GROUP | 50% | 10% | 11% | 13% | 16% |
| 4. | I CAN CONTROL MY TEMPER IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS WITH FRIENDS | 37% | 18% | 20% | 22% | 3% |

INTERPRETATION

It is found that the prospective teachers from rural area have greater social competence than the prospective teachers from urban area. People in urban area are connected to virtual friends rather than a face to face relationship so they lack social skills. Rural areas are perceived to have more supportive social networks than do urban areas. The people know the other inhabitants very well and are socially connected to each other through many religious and traditional festivals and customs. People in urban area though live in a crowded apartment live alienated not connected with others. Also, there has been a gradual disintegration of the joint family system and emergence of 'nuclear family'. Reflecting the rise of the nuclear families in urban area, common living, shared responsibilities and utilities and also co-existence, which played a key role in development was degenerated. This may be the reason for the found significant difference.

The percentage analysis reveal that most of the prospective teachers have moderate social competence. The question wise analysis reveal that nearly 40% of the prospective teachers feel hard to get along well with others and enjoy making fun of others. More than half of the prospective teachers prefer to work alone rather than in a group.

This clearly reveals the lack of social competence among prospective teachers. India gives importance to collectivism which emphasize the needs and goals of the group as a whole over the needs and desires of each individual. According to Indian culture, relationships with other members of the group and the interconnectedness between people especially the family play a central role in each person's identity. Due to the impact of westernization and modernization collectivism is slowly getting replaced by individualism which focus on the needs, rights and concerns of each person which hinders the development of socially appropriate behaviors and mannerisms according to the social expectations of the environment

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed that the social competence of prospective teachers should be improved. The following recommendations are suggested to develop the social competence of prospective teachers.

- Prospective teachers must be provided opportunities to explore and improve interpersonal relationships.
- The concept of synergy must be introduced to the prospective teachers.

- Participation in family gatherings during special occasions must be given importance.
- Parents should lay emphasis on visiting relatives and friends during vacation replacing expensive tours.
- The need for quality time must be stressed in families.
- Student teachers must be made aware of the advantages of having real friends rather than virtual friends.
- Personality development training should be a part of the B.Ed. curriculum which should help students to discover their personality and get to know their strengths and weaknesses. Prospective teachers should be helped to bear a positive attitude and look at the brighter side of life.
- They should be encouraged to participate in conversations, discussions at home, school and college.
- Prospective teachers should be trained to practice clear communication: both verbal and non-verbal and use appropriate body language and gestures or other nonverbal ways to express themselves to be socially competent.

CONCLUSION

A well-developed social competence can be considered a necessary prerequisite for the practice of the teaching profession. The study revealed that the social competence of prospective teachers was average, hence suggested a few measures to develop the social competence of prospective teachers to the desired level. The Recommendations suggested could be adopted by educationists, policy makers, curriculum planners, teacher educators and parents for the development of a better social competence among prospective teachers.

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