



Understanding Pre-service Teachers' Attitudes towards Teaching Profession to build Effective, Affective and Reflective Teachers' for tomorrow's learners – A Futuristic Challenge in Teacher Education

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Abstract

The whole identity of the preservice teacher as a budding teacher depends on his/her attitude towards teaching profession. Teachers' attitudes are important because they would determine the course of action the preservice teacher would take in her teaching journey. This study explores pre-service teachers' motivation for entering teaching profession and their attitude towards teaching profession. A total of 38 pre-service teachers completed a two-part questionnaire exploring their motivations for becoming teachers & their attitude towards teaching profession. The study reveals that most of the respondents have taken up teaching because they enjoy interacting with children and are keen to be humanistic in their teacher-taught interactions, then it is to be taken into account that why teachers don't continue to mirror similar attitudes and what action plan can be taken to create passionate & committed teachers. The final part discusses the implications for the continual enhancement of teacher education programmes to build Effective, Affective and Reflective Teachers' for tomorrow's learners.

Key Words:-

The teaching profession has undergone a radical change from the Gurukul system to the present system of education. Looking back at the earlier times, reverence towards the

teacher came naturally to all of us, and the respect towards them is still held strong in our hearts. Earlier when the question “What do you want to be when you grow up?” was posed, the answer eight times out of ten was “A Teacher”. However, over the last few decades, the image of the “noble” teacher - self sacrificing and engaged in the act of shaping the future, has transformed gradually. The change in image though gradual has been quite severe. Teaching is now a profession rather than a passion and thus there is a paradigm shift in the perception of teachers. The teacher today invokes an image of someone with an easy job, moderate pay and job security, with low efficiency and zero accountability. Now, when the question “What do you want to be when you grow up?” is posed, the answer mostly is ~ A Lawyer, Engineer, Investment banker, Accountant, doctor or the likes but seldom *a teacher*. This situation seems to lend undue credence that “He who can - do, he who cannot teaches” (Afe, 2002).

Another shift that we see today is that children in several schools have reported that the teachers would regularly hit them hard with hand or a ruler, pinch them or make them stand or kneel outside the classroom. A study conducted with support from UNICEF revealed that 66 percent of children in the state of Maharashtra reported that their teacher regularly punish them in class; the figure for the state of Tamil Nadu was 87 percent. (Mode, 1996). The prevalence of corporal punishment against children in schools is common occurrence these days whose imprints are reported almost every other day in the newspapers. These changes speak volume about altering attitudes of today’s teaching fraternity. But, the question that arises is that is it the new entrants in the profession bringing this attitudinal shift or are these changes due to rising demands of using new technologies, higher expectation from teachers and new innovations to teaching and learning that are burdening the educators today.

This thus, brings us to the root ~ that with what ‘*intent*’ does the preservice teachers’ take up teaching as the profession. On basis of their intent to join the teaching fraternity, their attitude towards teaching profession is formed. Attitudes are typically conceptualized as having three related components: cognitive (i.e., the idea or assumptions upon which the attitude is based), affective (i.e., feelings about the issue), and behavioral (i.e., a predisposition toward an action that corresponds with the assumption or belief) (Wood, 2000). Thus, it can be noted that the whole identity of the preservice teacher as a budding teacher depends on his/her attitude towards teaching

profession. Teachers' attitudes are also important because they would determine the course of action the preservice teacher would take in her teaching journey. Teacher attitudes are often translated into specific classroom and instructional practices which in turn affect student behavioural and learning outcomes (Cook, 2002).

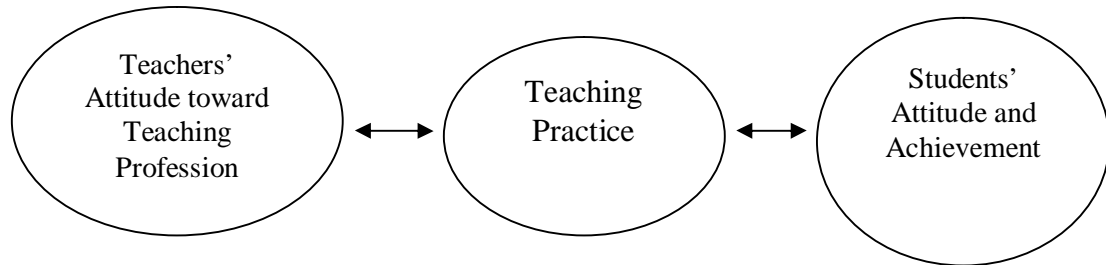


Figure 1. The cycle of the relationship between attitudes and teaching practices (Smith, 1993).

Teacher's attitude is an important variable in classroom application of new ideas and novel approaches to instruction (Reinke & Moseley, 2002). Figure 1 indicates that, teachers' attitudes towards teaching have an effect not only on their teaching practice, but also on their students. According to the related research studies, teacher's attitude also plays a vital role in their commitment towards the teaching profession professional growth as a teacher and effectiveness of teacher-pupil interaction. Research examining why pre-service teachers' choose teaching as a career points to: 1) altruistic reasons, such as serving children and the community; 2) intrinsic factors, such as a love of teaching and learning; and 3) extrinsic motivations, such as the attraction of long vacations (Kyriacou, Hultgren, & Stephens, 1999). A study of the characteristics of African American pre-service teachers' found that respondents' family relationships were significant in their decisions to become teachers (McCray, Sindelar, Kilgore, & Neal, 2002).

Considering these, the author intended to conduct a study to determine preservice teachers' attitude towards teaching profession and their motivations to take it up as a career choice. To achieve this purpose, following research questions were stated:-

1. What are the preservice teachers' attitudes towards teaching as a career choice?
2. What are the reasons that pre-service teachers' choose teaching as a profession?

3. How committed are the pre-service teachers' to teaching profession?
4. What are the preservice teachers' teacher-pupil interaction attitudes?

For this study, a questionnaire was administered to the 38 pre-service teachers' in the B.Ed Degree programme of University of Mumbai. The instrument used in the study was divided into two parts: Part A comprised of a open-ended question which examined the perceptions of pre-service teachers' about choosing the teaching perception and Part B, was a questionnaire survey which investigated the beliefs of pre-service teachers' about teaching and the teaching profession rated on a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). 8 items were written to measure the motives of the participants to take up teaching as a career, 8 items were written to examine the preservice teachers' commitment in teaching and 9 items to know preservice teachers' teacher-pupil interaction attitudes. The items were developed from literature review Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was reported as 0.75.

Data Analysis:

Part A (Why did you choose to become a teacher?)

Part A of the questionnaire required participants to self-report why they chose to become a teacher. A free-response format was chosen, however, mindful of the unstructured nature of the qualitative data from an open-ended question, simplified categorization is used to enable a more thematic analysis. The categorization phase employed a three-step content analysis procedure (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In a first "unitizing phase" the transcripts were broken down into units that ranged from a phrase to several sentences. Second, the units were organized into emergent categories or themes. The assignment of descriptors to each category reflected attempts to capture the perceived communality or shared message amongst the units.

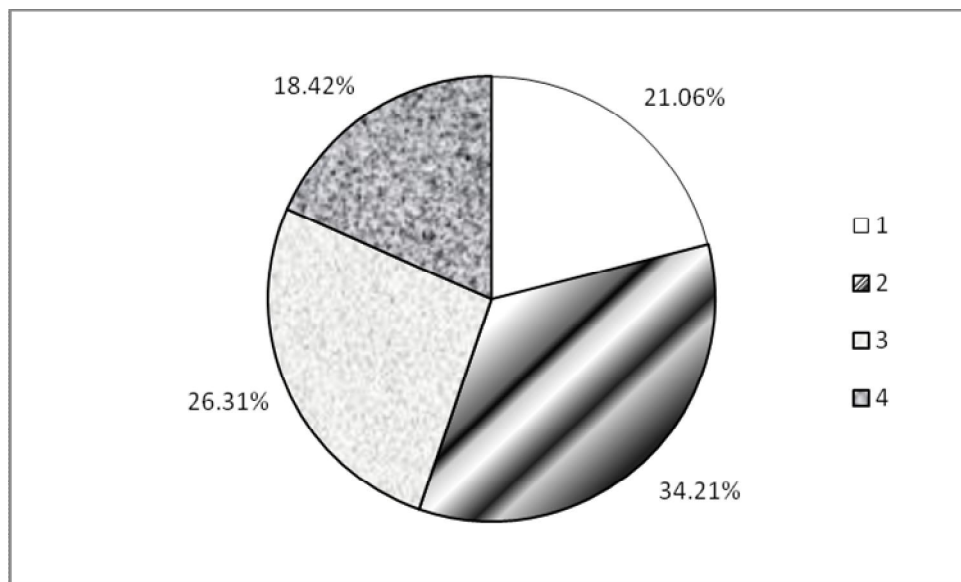
A set of 4 key categories emerged from the analysis of the transcripts:

1. A noble profession – a respectable profession, caring and making a difference to the society.
2. Intrinsic Motives – gives satisfaction and contentment, love for children and interest to work with them.

3. Extrinsic motives – the desire for job security, family expectations, the desire for long vacations, convenient working hours
4. Influence from others – such as teachers, parents, peers and mass media

The frequency counts indicate 8 (21.06%) preservice teachers' gave responses that were in category 1, 13 (34.21%) in category 2, 10 (26.31%) in category 3 and 7 (18.42%) in category 4.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of responses to the question “Why did you choose to become a teacher?”



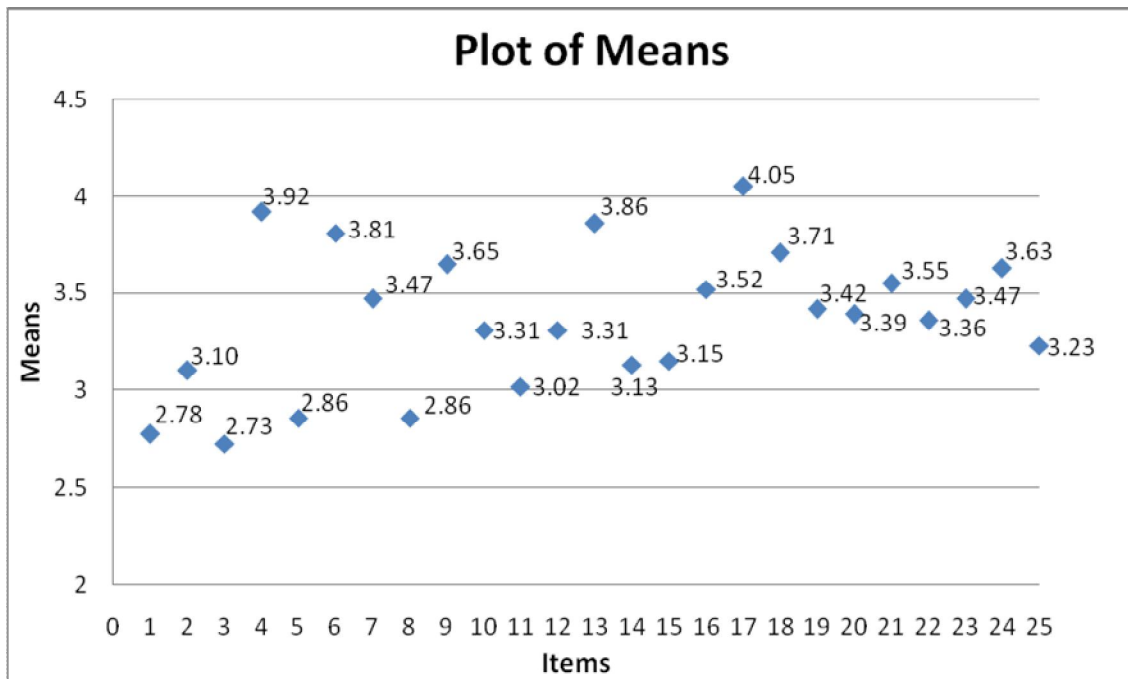
Part B (Teacher Attitudes towards the profession)

Part B of the questionnaire consisted of 25 statements. Each statement had a 5-point Likert rating scale to measure participants' attitudes towards the teaching profession. The statements expressed opinions and beliefs about teaching and the teaching profession. The range of means received was from 2.73 to 4.05.

Plot of Means

Figure 3 shows the plots of means of the 25 statements. The range of means received was from 2.73 to 4.05. The lowest mean score (2.73) was drawn from item 3, If I would have

known that teachers have to bear such a great pressure, I wouldn't have chosen teaching. The next lowest mean score (2.78) was drawn from item 1, I have always aspired to be a teacher. The highest mean score (4.05) was drawn from item 17, It is the love for children that I have taken up teaching as a profession, followed by item 4, I find teaching a very interesting task because it gives me lot of satisfaction, with a mean score of 3.92.



The plot of mean values of the 25 statements as shown in Figure 3, on the whole, gives a glimpse about attitude towards teachings as a profession of the pre-service teachers' in this study. The lowest mean score (2.73) was drawn from item 3, *If I would have known that teachers have to bear such a great pressure, I wouldn't have chosen teaching*. This response reflects a generational perception that teaching is a laid back job. The highest mean score (4.05) was drawn from item 17, *It is the love for children that I have taken up teaching as a profession*, this response gives a idea that intrinsic motives like the love for the children propel many to join the profession.

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of individual item responses of the participants about their attitude towards teaching profession

Items	Agree [#] (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree* (%)
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I have always aspired to be a teacher.	10 (26.31%)	10 (26.31%)	18 (47.36%)
The idea of teaching different types of students makes me like teaching more.	16 (42.1%)	6 (15.78%)	16 (42.1%)
If I would have known that teachers have to bear such a great pressure, I wouldn't have chosen teaching.	16 (42.1%)	9 (23.68%)	13 (34.21%)
I find teaching a very interesting task because it gives me lot of satisfaction.	25 (65.78%)	8 (21.05%)	5 (13.15%)
Teaching is not my first career choice.	19 (50%)	6 (15.78%)	13 (34.21%)
I believe that teacher's attitude impacts student's academic achievement.	22 (57.89%)	8 (21.05%)	8 (21.05%)
I like teaching more after joining B.Ed programme.	19 (50%)	10 (26.31%)	9 (23.68%)
Teaching is too hard and there is no adequate return.	13 (34.21%)	19 (50%)	6 (15.78%)
I am willing to teach lifelong.	28 (73.68%)	5 (13.15%)	5 (13.15%)
I am proud of my career choice to become a teacher.	16 (42.1%)	9 (23.68%)	13 (34.21%)
I have taken up teaching because of better working hours and holidays.	12 (31.57%)	11 (28.94%)	15 (39.47%)
If I have to keep on learning new information technology techniques, I would better give up teaching.	12 (31.57%)	10 (26.31%)	16 (42.1%)
No matter how bad students behave, I will always try my best to teach them.	23 (60.52%)	12 (31.57%)	3 (7.89%)
If there is a better paid job, I won't teach any more.	13 (34.21%)	11 (28.94%)	14 (36.84%)
I would encourage others to take up teaching as a profession.	15 (39.47%)	12 (31.57%)	11 (28.94%)
I believe that if student do not obey their teacher, they should be severely punished.	11 (28.94%)	9 (23.68%)	18 (47.36%)
It is the love for children that I have taken up teaching as a profession.	29 (76.31%)	6 (15.78%)	3 (7.89%)
Teaching is meaningful because students need my help in their development.	23 (60.52%)	10 (26.31%)	5 (13.15%)
My practice teaching experience in B.Ed has made me more committed in teaching.	18 (47.36%)	13 (34.21%)	7 (18.42%)
Items	Agree[#] (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree* (%)
I believe every student can be taught to be good.	18 (47.36%)	10 (26.31%)	10 (26.31%)
I shall value more about my students' acceptance of my teaching than the principals' acceptance.	19 (50%)	9 (23.68%)	10 (26.31%)
The teaching workload is too much for me and I want to give up teaching.	10 (26.31%)	10 (26.31%)	18 (47.36%)
I believe that a teacher can be strict to propel students on the right path.	6 (15.78%)	15 (39.47%)	17 (44.73%)
I am looking forward to use innovative and creative teaching methods very often to bring about better learning outcomes.	17 (44.73%)	12 (31.57%)	9 (23.68%)
If I have to choose again,I will still choose to be a teacher	12 (31.57%)	16 (42.1%)	10 (26.31%)

* Sum and percentage include Strongly Disagree and Disagree

Sum and percentage include Strongly Agree and Agree

Findings:

Research Question 1: Teacher Attitudes: *What are the preservice teachers' attitudes towards teaching as a career choice?* The key findings from the Part B of the instrument reveal that for most of the respondents (50%) teaching has not been the first career choice. But then, they have taken up teaching because it gives them satisfaction (65%) and they love children (76%) Also, many are now proud to become teachers (42%) though it hasn't always been their aspiration.

Research Question 2: Teacher Motivations: *What are the reasons that pre-service teachers' choose teaching as a profession?* The Part A of the instrument paints a positive picture about the motives of the preservice teachers' to choose teaching as a profession. In line with the part B findings, it revealed that majority (34.21%) respondents wanted to become teachers because they enjoyed working with children; although many (26.31%) noted the convenience of work hours; the availability of summer vacations as a motivator; almost as many (21.06%) wished to take it up considering it to be a noble profession; far fewer (18.42%) cited the influence of friends; family members for their choice of teaching as a career.

Research Question 3: Teacher Commitments: *How committed are the pre-service teachers' to teaching profession?* The key findings expose that many (72%) entrants are willing to teach lifelong which is phenomenal and there are many who are willing to learn new technological trends (31.57%) and use creative & innovative techniques (44.73%) as per the demands of the school. Though there are few who would give up teaching for a better paid job (34.21%) and due to work load (26.31%)

Research Question 4: *What are the preservice teachers' teacher-pupil interaction attitudes?* The results reveal that many respondents (57.89 %) agreed that teacher attitude impacts students learning. Also, few (28.94%) consider that the teacher should be strict to bring about better learning outcome otherwise most respondents (60.52 %) agree to be

persistent in their teaching efforts irrespective of student behaviors. For many (60.52 %), teacher-pupil interaction is the key for teaching to be meaningful.

Discussion:

The study findings indicate that preservice teachers' though don't consider teaching as their first career choice but the intrinsic motives – the interest and satisfaction in teaching keep them committed to the profession. Also, with majority of respondents taking up the profession for the love they have for children weigh the teacher-pupil interactions highly and consider them to directly impact student's achievement.

The current study had several limitations. To begin with, the sample was a convenience sample and small in size; consequently, the extent to which the findings can be generalized is limited. A second limitation of the current study stems from the limited reliability of the instrument. Finally, the study is also limited to English medium preservice teachers' of a Private- unaided College of Education in Mumbai.

Implications of the Findings:

The findings presented and discussed in the previous section have important implications for the continual development and enhancement of teacher education programmes where teacher professional development needs to be taken cognizance of. Also, in today's globalization age, the rising demand to cater to the new age learners, lays the onus of making effective, reflective and affective teachers on teacher education programmes. Earlier, it was well known that – Teachers are born and not made, but, in today's world with rise in number of academic institution, there is ever rising demand for teachers. Hence, it is of paramount importance to make competent teachers to gratify the 21st century learners. This responsibility is to be shouldered by Teacher Education programme which needs to take concrete actions to build teachers' with positive attitude and commitment towards the teaching profession. As the study reveals that most of the preservice teachers' take up teaching because they enjoy teaching children and initially are keen to be humanistic in their teacher-taught interactions, then it is to be taken into account that **why the preservice teachers' face an attitudinal change in their in-service years and what action plan can be taken to create passionate & committed**

teachers. Passion and commitment begin to fade as teachers become debilitated by the daily demands of students, the environment and personal life factors (Day, 2004). Teacher Educators need to formulate measures for reduction of anxieties, stress and burnout, an awareness of the need for life-work balance, coupled with support from colleagues and others, etc in order to restore teachers' passion and commitment in teaching.

Implications for reforms: Moving towards a new educational future for Teacher Education

To embark towards a new educational feature, the first step involves a change in the roles of both teacher educators and pre-service teachers'. The pre-service teacher requires new knowledge and skills to assume the role of learning facilitator, knowledge guide, knowledge navigator, humanistic and affective teacher and co-learner with the student. The present teacher education program needs to be restructured to inculcate in budding teachers these skills to build a positive attitude towards teaching and to enhance their competencies to make them effective, affective and reflective teachers so that their lamp of passion and commitment to the profession keeps lighting forever. Some suggestions to restructure teacher education program to prepare present generation teacher with these competencies and attitude are:

- To increase teacher effectiveness Teacher Education programmes should offer opportunities to promote the use of learning circles, which offer opportunities for students to exchange ideas with other students, teachers, and professionals across the world. These interaction can also promote better understanding of teacher-taught relationship by sharing other teachers experiences
- Infrastructure of teacher education in accordance with Global challenges – Virtual Classrooms, smart colleges, networking, e-learning, blogging, etc. so that when the preservice teachers' are placed in today's smart classroom they feel at home and are prepared to cope with new technological challenges.
- Techniques like Concept mapping, outlining, reflective teaching model, experiential learning, collaborative and co-operative learning, peer-coaching, etc need to be

adopted to teach the Pre-service teachers'. They should be encouraged to see that knowledge is dynamic and evolving, they are then more likely to pass on these skills on to the children they teach.

- Instilling lifelong learning attitudes to be in touch with the ever increasing knowledge society of today. Quoting Rabindranath Tagore, '*A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame*' ~ a teacher can never teach truly unless he is learning himself.
- Teacher Education programmes should focus on promoting reflective practices in the teaching programme itself, so that preservice teachers' are able to self evaluate themselves and can keep on working to improve their teaching competencies.
- Practicing to write self reflections for practice teaching sessions, maintaining reflective journals to jot their experiences from onset of the teaching programme and encouraging peer observations, reflections and discussion would give preservice teachers' opportunities to become reflective practitioners' giving them scope to learn to reflect and improve themselves.
- Teacher Education programmes should inculcate the empathetic feeling among preservice teachers' by encouraging them to think from the view point of the student.
- Organization of workshops, seminars where in the preservice teachers' can learn the art of managing stress levels, time management, being patient, balancing work-personal life, classroom management skills, professional ethics, etc to reduce teacher burnout and to increase professional commitment.
- Interpersonal capacity of preservice teachers' to be enhanced by fostering both an affective climate where teachers feel affirmed and motivated to participate, and a cognitive climate that encourages learning.
- Discussing cases, organizing debates, extempore, etc for topics like effects of Corporal Punishments, teacher behaviors and expectations, etc to provide them platform to express their views and thoughts and to instill in them humane attitudes.
- Focus of Teacher Education needs to be broadened beyond creator and transmitter of generalized knowledge to encompass enhancing the knowledge creation capacities of all pupil-teachers i.e. focus on skills needed to assess, assimilate and

accommodate new knowledge – critical thinking, critiquing, reflection, meta cognition, analyzing, hypothesing, etc

Conclusion: A stable learning society will not evolve unless teachers in training and teachers in service understand and come to terms with changing trends in the teaching profession and adapt themselves to it. Teacher Education needs to focus amidst these changing trends to build effective, affective and reflective teachers with positive attitudes for creating better tomorrows. In words of C.S. Lewis,

"The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles but to irrigate deserts. ... By starving the sensibility of our pupils we only make them easier prey to the propagandist when he comes."

Thus, the Teacher Educators must work to bring preservice teachers' to the creative threshold of independent, lifelong learning to become effective, affective and reflective teachers' because their fruit is our labor and their seed becomes our legacy

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