

Attitude of Student-teachers towards the Humanistic Approach to Teaching and Learning in School

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Abstract

The purpose of the present work was to study the attitude of the student-teachers of three Teacher Training Institutes of Delhi, towards the Humanistic Approach to teaching and learning in schools. The sample consisted of 200 respondents studying in these institutes. The questionnaire, which is a Likert five-point scale, developed by Kyriacou and Cheng (1993), was used as a research tool to collect quantitative data for the study and Structured Respondent Interviews of ten students-teachers were used as the qualitative component of methodology to supplement the data derived from the responses to questionnaires. Further, differences in the attitude of the respondents with respect to their institutes, gender and subject stream were also found. The t-test, at 0.10 level, was used to find the significance of the differences obtained from quantitative analysis. The major finding was that the attitude of the total sample was 'strongly humanistic towards teaching and learning in schools. It was found the female student teachers of the sample had more humanistic attitude towards teaching and learning than the male student teachers. The respondents' interviews reflected that most of the characteristics of the teachers, whom the sample interviewees liked in their school time, were in coherence with the characteristics of a humanist teacher, i.e., caring, approachable, sympathetic, and tolerant towards the interpretations of the students, and also, keeping relations beyond the classroom with the students. Further, the characteristics of the teachers, who were disliked by the interviewees, were mostly non-

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humanistic, i.e., prejudiced, biased, using sarcastic and discouraging words, indulging in corporal punishment frequently, and lacking moral character. It was, thus, concluded that the humanistic teachers had a long-lasting positive influence on their pupils while the non-humanistic teachers had a long-lasting negative impression on the minds of their students. Those student-teachers, who scored highest on the quantitative data collecting tool, did not give credit to their teacher training institutes for their strong humanistic approach.

INTRODUCTION

It does not require any superhuman powers to recognise that the schools are in deep crisis. The wide unrest and stress within the four walls of high schools and colleges are symptomatic of the underlying sickness. Socially too, the most significant problems of our time are related to how to live with each other in a world growing smaller and smaller. The education system, schools and teachers are blamed for this. The diagnosis of this educational system is being done for years through research, and attempts at improvements have also been done with the sincerest intentions, but the improvement attempted does not seem to have made any breakthrough. It is because the significant changes will only come about as teachers change their behaviour and attitude towards teaching and learning.

Institutions are made up of persons not equipment, and it is the behaviour of the teachers in the classroom that will ultimately determine whether our schools meet the demand and challenges of present times or fail to do so (Combs, 1989). Thus, the focus of scrutiny should be the behaviour of teacher in the classroom. An

observation made in the report of Education Commission (1964) states that, 'the destiny of India is being shaped in its classrooms'. Thus, it highlights the impact of behaviour of a teacher in the classroom on the future of our nation.

Among Indian educators, it has been widely accepted that teacher is not only a social person dealing with content but has many other roles to play simultaneously— of a facilitator of learning, an occasional therapist, and of a guide among other roles. 'Self-as-instrument' concept of Combs (1969) explains it better and is thus, the emerging face of an effective teacher. 'Self-as-instrument' implies that each teacher must discover effective ways to utilise their peculiar and unique talents to get maximum advantage, i.e., evolving in the process of teaching rather than having the mechanistic and structured approach towards teaching. This adds the practical or humanistic dimension to teaching. Maslow, the originator of Humanistic or Third-force psychology, sees the self-actualised person as the most effective teacher (Maslow, 1970). Rogers (1969) directs special attention

to the personal qualities and behaviour of the teachers in the accomplishment of students' freedom-to-learn. The Humanistic Approach can be summarised in terms of four main principles (Kyriacou and Cheng, 1993):

1. An emphasis on the whole person (mind, body and emotions).
2. An emphasis on personal growth (the tendency of moving towards a higher level of health creativity and fulfilment).
3. An emphasis on the person's awareness (the person's subjective view about themselves and the world).
4. An emphasis on the personal agency (the power of choice and responsibility).

Combs (1964) also lists some of the purposes of a good and effective teacher as:

1. helping rather than dominating;
2. understanding rather than condemning;
3. accepting rather than rejecting;
4. valuing integrity rather than violating integrity;
5. being positive rather than negative;
6. being open rather than close to experience and
7. being tolerant of ambiguity rather than intolerant.

Thus, their principles of teachers with a humanistic approach to teaching and learning are common with the purposes of a good and effective teacher.

Teachers, with this added dimension to their subject mastery, can cure the present crisis of the education system. Even the National Policy of Education (NPE) 1986, has pointed out that, 'in the Indian way of thinking, a human being is a positive asset and a precious national resource which needs to be cherished, nurtured and developed with tenderness and care coupled with dynamism.'

However, the reality is miles away from these cherished goals. The Committee to review the NPE 1986 (Ramamurti in 'Towards an Enlightened and Humane Society-National Policy Of Education 1986-A Review', 1990) points out that the teachers' preparation programme by and large is:

- not catering to all types of students during practice teaching.
- having little or no scope for the development of affective domain of the teacher especially of the quality of essential features such as empathy, and respect for an individual student.
- laying minimum emphasis on learning to be an educator for human development rather than for nearly meeting examination needs.

EXPECTATIONS FROM TEACHER EDUCATING PROGRAMME

Given the contemporary scene of an Indian classroom and observation of committee to review the NPE, our

teacher-preparation programme needs to review and update its curriculum and educational experiences which is provided to the student-teachers. Our teacher-preparation programme must aim at assisting the student-teachers in 'developing a personal psychology-accurate and close to real life situations' (Ducharme and Nash, 1975). They should be generalists in human relations skills, more concerned with assisting their students in the mental, physical, personal and social development rather than on mere mastery of subjects. Thus, to save Indian society from the present crisis, there is a need to have teachers who are committed to humanistic and related ideas and being a prominent source of supply for prospective teachers, our teacher preparation programmes shoulder the responsibility.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Combs(1972) points out that much research on the Teaching Act has been disappointing and ineffective in providing the guidelines for teacher-education because of its exclusive concern with the behaviour of the teacher. He suggests that behaviour is only a symptom; the causes of behaviour lie in perceptions and beliefs. This suggests that the researches must be concerned with the perceptions and beliefs or attitude of the teacher rather than their behaviour. Attitude influences the behaviour of the teacher in various areas— for example, in interaction

with students, in selecting methods for teaching and in deciding various educational experiences to be given to the students. Thus, the present study is being conducted to know how favourable the attitude of the student-teachers towards a humanistic approach to teaching and learning is. This study also attempts to throw light on some of the differences between those who favour the humanistic approach highly and those who do not. Experiences of more humanistic student-teachers can be utilised to create similar educational experiences for the future student-teachers. The knowledge of the possible reasons for having a less humanistic attitude can be utilised to modify less humanistic attitude to a more humanistic attitude. Also, the influence of factors like gender, subject-stream and institute, on the attitude of student-teacher has been studied. These results can help the experts to modify the curriculum of a teacher-education programme to make it more effective in producing prospective teachers with a highly favourable humanistic attitude towards teaching and learning.

METHOD OF THE STUDY

(A) Objectives

The objectives of the present study are:

1. to find out the attitude of student-teachers towards the humanistic approach to teaching and learning in schools.

2. to find out the difference in the attitude of student-teachers belonging to the threeteacher training institutes of Delhi, namely Central Institute of Education, Jamila Millia Islamia and Lady Irwin College.
3. to find out the difference in the attitude of student-teachers belonging to various subject streams, namely Science, Commerce, Humanities and Home Science.
4. to find out the difference in the attitude of male student teachers and female student teachers of the sample.

(B) Sample

For Questionnaire

The sample for the questionnaire consisted of 200 student-teachers drawn from the three institutes of Delhi, namely,

1. Teacher's college, Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI)
2. Department of Education (DOE), Delhi University
3. Lady Irwin College (LIC), New Delhi

The sample constitutes male as well as female student-teachers. The student-teachers belong to the following subject streams— Science, Commerce, and Humanities and Home Science.

In the sample, the students who had studied B.Sc. Mathematics (Hons) were considered in Science stream while those who had studied B.A Mathematics (Hons) were considered in Humanities.

Table 1
Number of respondents in various categories of the sample

S.No.	Category/Type	No. of students
1	Male students	18
2	Female students	182
3	DoE, DU students	102
4	JMI students	38
5	LIC students	60
6	Science	66
7	Humanities	64
8	Homescience	60
9	Commerce	10

The age of the student-teachers in the sample varied from twenty to twenty-five years. In all the institutes, student-teachers of English medium section were included in the sample.

Since every student-teacher of English medium sections of the three institutes of Delhi had an equal chance of being selected and the selection of a student-teacher did not influence the selection of others, therefore, the sample for administering the questionnaire was a random sample.

For Interview

The sample for the interview consisted of ten respondents:

1. five of those respondents who have scored highest on the questionnaire;
2. five of those respondents who have scored lowest on the questionnaire.

Thus, the method of non-probability was adopted while selecting the sample for the interview.

(*The questionnaire is a five point Likert scale so the responses of each student teacher were converted into a score)

(C) Measuring Instruments and Tools Used

Humanistic Teaching Attitude Questionnaire (Kyriacou and Cheng, 1993)

It is a five-point Likert scale, with twenty statements, characterising the Humanistic Approach to Teaching and Learning in schools. Statements numbered 2,3,8,10 and 20 deal with the whole person and personal growth. Statements numbered 1,7,9,13 and 19 deal with facilitative teaching, including teacher-pupil relationship. Statements numbered 4,5,6,11,12, 14, 15 and 16 deal with pupil-centred learning. Statements numbered 17 and 18 deal with the self-esteem of the pupil and respect for others. It is developed based on an analysis of writings of Maslow and Rogers.

Respondent Interviews

The interviewer asked the following set of questions:

- a. How did you decide to teach?
- b. Which school teacher of yours you liked and disliked the most? Why?
- c. Was your choice the same with everyone?
- d. Did the teacher whom you liked the most during your school time, possessed the characteristics

dealt in the questionnaire? Which one did they lack?

- e. Is your humanistic attitude towards your students due to the influence of your training?
- f. Could you practise your humanistic beliefs during your teaching practice?
- g. Will you be able to practise these beliefs during your regular school-teaching?

The purpose of the interview was to find out about the possible reasons and incidences that would have shaped their attitude.

(D) Procedure

The questionnaires were administered to the groups of student-teachers in the three institutes on three different days. Though there was no time limit, respondents took approximately 15–20 minutes each to attempt it. The scores were calculated for each respondent based on their responses in the following manner:

Table 2
Scores corresponding to the various responses to a statement of the questionnaire

Response	Score
Strongly agree	5
Mildly agree	4
Neutral	3
Mildly disagree	2
Strongly disagree	1

Thus, each respondent had a score which denoted their attitude towards teaching and learning in schools, as categorised in the following table:

Table 3
Relation between the scores of the respondents and their attitude

Range of the score	Attitude of the respondent
100–80	Strongly humanistic
80–60	Fairly humanistic
60–40	Neutral w.r.t. the humanistic approach
40–20	Fairly non-humanistic
20–00	Strongly non-humanistic

After the administration and scoring of the responses, means of the scores of various groups were calculated, for example mean of the scores of female student-teachers of the sample, etc. The difference between the means of various groups were analysed, for example difference between the means of male and female student-teachers, difference between the means of JMI and DOE student-teachers, and difference between the means of LIC and JMI student-teachers. After this, t-test at 0.10 level was administered to find the significance of difference between the means of various samples, statistically.

Then ten respondents were selected for the respondent interviews. The ten respondents were the highest five scorers and the lowest five scorers of the total sample. They were informed about the interview and were requested to give time of their choice for the same.

Each interview was conducted in isolation and an informal atmosphere, with the assurance of anonymity.

A maximum of two interviews was conducted in a day. Notes were made with the permission of the respondent. For this, the investigator made use of 'an aide-memoire as a relatively informal way of organising the interview', to make the recording procedure easier.

Results

1. The score indicating the attitude of a student-teacher towards humanistic approach to teaching and learning were found to vary from 68 to 100. Only 19 students had scores between 68 to 79, i.e., fairly humanistic attitude category and 181 out of 200 student-teachers scored between 80 to 100, i.e., strongly humanistic attitude category.
2. The mean of the scores for the total sample was 88.78, indicating strongly humanistic approach.

Table 4
Mean and variance of samples

Category	Mean	Variance
Male	82.56	74.03
Female	89.40	35.32
DoE, DU	88.70	43.17
JMI	86.97	48.63
LIC	90.07	33.33
Science	87.83	46.54
Humanities	88.38	48.66
HomeScience	90.07	33.33
Commerce	89.90	10.89

Table 5
Table of t-test value at 0.10 level
and related degree of freedom

Categories	Calculated/ table value of t-test at 0.10 level	Degree of freedom
DoE vs JMI	1.33 / 1.66	138
DoE vs LIC	1.39 / 1.66	160
LIC vs JMI	2.28 / 1.66	96
Science vs Humanities	0.455/1.66	128
Science vs Home Science	1.98/1.66	124
HomeScience vs Humanities	1.47 / 1.66	122

Note: When the calculated value of t-test is more than the table value of t-test, then the difference is significant.

MAJOR FINDINGS

The analysis of the data collected had two components— quantitative and qualitative.

Quantitative Analysis

1. The attitude of the student-teachers in total sample and the three teacher training institutes, separately, was strongly humanistic towards the teaching and learning in schools.
2. No significant difference was found between the attitude of student-teachers from the three institutes; except between the attitude of student-teachers from LIC and JMI. In case of LIC and JMI, it was found using t-test at 0.10 level, that the attitude of student-teachers from LIC was significantly more humanistic than the attitude of the student-teachers from JMI.
3. The attitude of the student-teachers from each of the four subject streams under consideration, was found to be strongly humanistic towards teaching and learning in schools.
4. Among the subject streams, a significant difference between the attitude of students from Home Science and Science was found, using t-test at 0.1 level. The student-teachers from Home Science was found to have a more humanistic attitude, than the student-teachers from Science sample, towards teaching and learning inschools.
5. The t-test was not administered to compare the attitude of students from Commerce stream with that of the students from Science, Humanities and Home Science streams because the sample size of Commerce students was very small as compared to the sample size of other streams (refer Table 1).
6. The attitude of female, as well as male student-teachers, was strongly humanistic towards teaching and learning in schools.
7. The attitude of female student-teachers was concluded to be more humanistic than the attitude of male student-teachers. The t-test was not conducted to

compare the two samples as the difference in the size of samples was large (refer Table 1). The conclusion was drawn on the basis of the comparison between the algebraic mean (refer Table 4) of the two samples as well as on the basis of the ratio of female and male respondents in the highest scorers group and lowest scorers group, selected for the interview. The algebraic mean of female respondents is higher than the algebraic mean of the male respondents. Also, among the five highest scorers, four were females and among the five lowest scorers, four were males.

Qualitative Analysis

1. The reasons which the high scorers; representative of strongly humanistic attitude gave for joining the teaching profession, were love of kids, aptitude for teaching, challenge of the job, nobility of the profession, chance to serve society, the positive influence of some family member in teaching profession and influence of noble characters like Rabindranath Tagore.
2. The reasons given by the low scorers, representing a mildly favourable humanistic approach, for joining the teaching profession, were inability to get into their cherished career, practical suitability, financial security and respectability of the profession.
3. Most of the characteristics of the teachers, whom the sample interviewees liked most in their school-time, were in coherence with the characteristics of humanist teachers, i.e., very good human beings, motherly, punctual, friendly, caring, soft, approachable, sympathetic, tolerant towards the interpretations of students, having good sense of humor, having devotion towards their subjects and keeping relations beyond the classroom with the pupils. It was thus concluded that the humanistic teachers had a long-lasting positive influence on their pupils.
4. The interviewees told that the teachers, whom they liked, had most of the qualities mentioned in the questionnaire. The quality that was found lacking most frequently was 'use of different standards to judge their pupil's academic achievement so that different levels of abilities are taken into account'.
5. The characteristics of the teachers, who were disliked by the sample interviewees, were mostly non-humanistic characteristics, i.e., prejudiced, biased, using sarcastic, insulting and discouraging words, lacking moral character, proud of their knowledge, lacking dedication towards their subject and indulging in corporal punishment

frequently. It was thus concluded that the non-humanistic teachers made a long-lasting negative impression on the minds of their students.

6. The sample high-scorers did not give credit for their strong humanistic approach to their teacher training institutes. They believed that they would have had the same approach, even without training.
7. All the interviewees credited their teacher-training for equipping them with a variety of methods of teaching, giving them confidence of facing many students and making them realise the importance of student involvement in lesson development.

DISCUSSION

There had been studies conducted on the beliefs and attitudes of teachers and the logic behind it had been that the beliefs and attitudes of a person affect their behaviour and actions. Clarks (1992) conducted a research, precisely to find the connection between the beliefs of the teachers and their actions/practice in the classrooms. The study suggested that the beliefs of the teachers guided their practices and the teachers tied what they did in the classrooms to the beliefs they held about teaching and learning. Thus, the beliefs and attitude of the student-teachers towards teaching and learning reflect and affect their classroom behaviour with their students.

A study similar to the present study was conducted by Kyriacou and Cheng(1993). It studied the attitude of student-teachers towards humanistic approach in teaching and learning using the questionnaire, used in the present study, and interview. The results mirrored the findings of the present study. The attitude of majority of the students was strongly humanistic towards teaching and learning in schools. The results of the interviews of their study also resonated with the results of the interviews of the present study, i.e., the sample student-teachers respected and liked the teachers who were enthusiastic, committed to their teaching, and confident about maintaining classroom control without resorting to the use of fear and punishment. They were described as flexible, giving help rather than criticism, approachable, fair, displaying a sense of humor, varying their use of teaching methods and viewing their pupils, not only as pupils, but as persons as well. Murray (1972) also conducted a study on students' perception of self-actualising and non-self-actualising teachers. Its findings supported the hypothesis of the study that students perceive self-actualising teachers as more concerned than non-self-actualising teachers. Since, self-actualisation is the highest of the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which in turn, has stemmed from the Humanistic Psychology, Murray's study strengthens the findings from

the interviews in the present study that interviewees liked teachers with humanistic approach towards teaching and learning more than other teachers, when they were students in schools.

Not only students but the teachers also believe that effective teaching and learning takes place when the teacher has humanistic characteristics. Steffens (1990), while studying the perception of the National State Teachers of the year in relation to specific conditions and characteristics of effective teaching and learning, also found that the most important characteristics necessary to be effective was the knowledge of subject matter, a caring and compassionate personality, enthusiasm, organisation, a sense of humor and love of children.

IMPLICATIONS

Combs (1972) points out that much research on the teaching has been concerned with the behavior of teachers, instead on their perceptions and beliefs, that actually influence their behaviour. He considers such researches as ineffective as behaviour is caused by the perceptions and beliefs. Greene (1972) points out that attitude of the teachers is a significant variable in the classroom and that the teacher training institutions must be concerned with it. The present study tries to fill this gap and provide the curriculum setters of teacher-education programme with a window to judge the gap between

the type of prospective teachers required and desired and the type of prospective teachers being actually sent to the schools from the teacher training institutes. Thus, the major implication of the present study is that the curriculum of teacher education needs to be enriched with experiences that inculcate a strongly favourable humanistic attitude towards teaching and learning in schools so that the teaching learning process in the schools can be made more effective and holistic.

A significant finding of the study was that the sample of the interviewees did not give credit to their institutes for their strong or mild humanistic approach towards teaching and learning in the schools. They believed that they would have had the same approach, even without the training. They gave their institutes the credit to equip them with pedagogies for curriculum completion, skill to face a large number of students and train for student centered lesson development. This finding provides the clue that the focus of the present curriculum is majorly on pedagogy and content delivery. The importance of humanistic approach to teaching and learning has to be inculcated in the prospective teachers along with the content delivery techniques. These two must be interwoven such that the prospective teachers are trained to modify their personal beliefs about teaching and learning to match with the core principles and beliefs of

the humanistic approach towards teaching and learning in schools. The present study provides clues for such modifications. Researches can be conducted on a large scale along these clues to prepare a complete guideline for the desired modifications in the curriculum of teacher-education.

As the study indicates that all the student-teachers favoured and liked the teachers showing the characteristics of a humanistic teacher, it is suggested that during the appointment of the teachers in the present schools, a reasonable weightage shall be given to those teachers who favour a humanistic approach towards teaching and learning. Thus, the present study implies to challenge the present system of recruitment of teachers based on the academic records of the teachers.

While admitting students to the teacher training institutes, their belief systems in relation to teaching and learning, can be made an important criteria for admission to the institute. It will facilitate in their teacher training, making them effective teachers or teachers strongly favouring Humanistic Approach towards teaching and learning.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

The present study, though a minor attempt, brings to notice a serious lacuna in our teacher training programmes. Thus, this study has a lot of utility and scope for further research. Conducting similar studies in teacher training institutes of all the states of India will give a better understanding of the type of teachers our institutes are generating to teach our next generations. For this, the questionnaire can be standardised on a large national sample, to be more useful and reliable. As in the present study, the investigator had to take the sample from the English medium sections of the institutes selected, as the language of the questionnaire was English. Attempts can be made to translate the given tool in Hindi and other major regional languages. Then, a similar study can be conducted on the student-teachers, who use these languages as their medium of instruction, during their teacher training. Further, since the attitude of teacher is significant during the initial schooling years of a child also, such study must be conducted on the nursery training institutes, DIETS and other Basic Teacher Training Institutes.

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