

How Informed Citizens, Prospective Teachers Are?

An Exploratory Study of Political Interest and Political Efficacy

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Abstract

An informed and competent citizenry is the basic essential for the progress and prosperity of any country in the world. A country is known by its citizens; their skills, resourcefulness and most importantly their participation into political issues contributes towards national progress. But nowadays, the bond of democracy is weakening which is an alarming concern; particularly for education which is the strongest agency to provide effective membership for the society. Therefore, we need teachers as informed citizens who can work as role models. In this premise, an empirical study was conducted to study the political interest and efficacy of prospective teachers. The results indicate that prospective teachers are better in political interest than political efficacy. Various personal and environmental variables of the study showed different pattern of influence in which the prominence of family is reaffirmed. On the whole, the study recommends including education of democratic citizenship in teacher education programs and outlines the importance of teachers in education of democratic citizenship.

In the beginning of the twenty first century, there is renewed interest in Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) at international level (Europe Commission, 1977; council of Europe, 2000, 2002). In Indian context too, today's socio-political scenario is dreary with lot of negative democratic practices. The low voting turnout, regional conflicts, religious intolerance and rampant

corruption pose the need of strengthening education for democratic citizenship. The society is once again looking towards education for resolving this predicament. In this context the role of teachers becomes very important. The big responsibility comes to the shoulder of teachers who are considered to be the pillars of society. They have the prerogative to shape the future of the

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country. Political efficacy and political interest are one of the important dimensions of citizenship education. These dimensions are needed to be developed among students so that they can judge their worth as a citizen of the country.

In terms of educating the children in making an ideal citizen Easton and Dennis (1967) in their study concluded that even very young children begin to conceptualise political figures and a sense of political efficacy. They further concluded highlighting the role of education that with longer period of education, political efficacy also increases. Political efficacy may be defined as the feeling that individual's action does have or can have an impact upon the political process i.e. worthwhile to perform one's civic duties. It is the feeling that political and social change is possible. Malik (1974) analyzed the interrelation between belief, efficacy and attitude towards democracy among urban students of Class IX and concluded that school is an important agent of political socialisation. He also found that teachers are more effective than parents to mould student's behaviour towards democratic way of life. Political interest is one of the essentials to develop democratic attitude among youth which refers to either expected or actual involvement in political activities, issues, affairs and processes. Ehman (1980) in a study conducted in United States and Canadian schools concluded that formal curriculum effectively transmit political knowledge, particularly to lower classes but does not substantially influence political attitude or participation. School and classroom

climate, teachers and student participation in extracurricular activities, however, do significantly influence political attitude and participation. Francis, et al. (2003) assessed the attitude of trainee teachers towards education for global citizenship and found that majority of trainee teachers recognise the importance of education for global citizenship within social curriculum. 76% of trainee teachers agree that global citizenship have a high priority in the secondary school curriculum. Gupta (1987) studied the political interest and political efficacy among undergraduate students and concluded that familial affiliation of undergraduates with politics is positively correlated with their political interest and political efficacy.

In the review of literature, it was also found that at international level a lot of research work related to need and importance of citizenship education, political efficacy of young children, political socialisation has been done. In Indian context however, researches related to political socialisation of students, attitude towards democracy, assessment, curriculum particularly of civics curriculum have been done, but no research was found on political interest and political efficacy among prospective teachers. So there is need to study two important traits of a democratic citizen i.e. political interest and political efficacy among prospective teachers.

Objective of the study

The main objective was to study the level of Political interest and Political efficacy among prospective teachers.

The effect of socio-economic-status, gender and stream of study was also studied in political interest and political efficacy of prospective teachers. Further, the study also draws the difference in political interest and political efficacy between prospective teachers coming from politically affiliated families and politically non-affiliated families.

Operational Definitions of Key Terms

Political Interest

Political interest refers to either expected or actual involvement in political activities proclivities, issues, affairs and process.

The test of political interest developed by Gupta, R. (1987) was used to measure the political interest. The score obtained on the scale is considered as political interest.

Political Efficacy

Political efficacy has been conceptualised as an individual's ability to understand the government, its functioning, Programs and policies and to feel that he/she or other citizens have the power to influence political decisions. The scores obtained on political efficacy scale of Gupta,R.(1987) considered as political efficacy.

Prospective teachers

Prospective teachers refer to the teacher trainees under pre-service program (B.Ed.) from different teacher education departments of different universities in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.

Hypotheses of the Study

Following null hypotheses were framed to study the political interest and political efficacy of prospective teachers.

- [1] (i) Prospective teachers having familial political affiliation do not differ significantly in political interest from prospective teacher who come from politically non-affiliated families.
- (ii) Prospective teachers having familial political affiliation do not differ significantly in political efficacy from prospective teachers who come from politically non-affiliated families.
- [2] (i) There is no significant difference in political interest between male and female prospective teachers.
- (ii) There in no significant difference in political efficacy between male and female prospective teachers.
- [3] (i) There is no significant difference in political interest between prospective teachers of humanities and science group.
- (ii) There is no significant deference in political efficacy between prospective teachers of humanities and science group.
- [4] (i) Prospective teachers from high, average and low socio-economic status do not differ significantly in political interest.
- (ii) Prospective teachers from high, average and Low socio economic status do not differ significantly in political efficacy.

Method

Descriptive survey methodology was applied to achieve the objectives.

Population

Students of B.Ed. enrolled in the session 2007-08 in different teacher education departments of university of Varanasi City was the population of the study.

Sample

B.Ed. Students of three universities of Varanasi i.e. Banaras Hindu University, Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth and Sampoorananand Sanskrit University have been selected randomly as sample

of the study. Sample was consisted of 412 students. Distribution of the sample is as follows.

Instruments

Scale of political Interest and Political efficacy developed by Gupta, R. (1987) was used for data collation. The scale consists of 38 items carrying the dimensions of political interest i.e. (i) Political leadership (ii) Political Discussion (iii) Political involvement (iv) Political participation

Scale of political efficacy was a five point Likert scale which was consisted of 38 items. The dimensions of Political efficacy taken in the study were: (i)

Table 1: Distribution of the Sample

<i>Name of University</i>	<i>Number of Male Students</i>	<i>Number of Female Students</i>	<i>Number of Students</i>
Banaras Hindu University	130	52	182
Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth	98	36	134
Sampoornanand Sanskrit University	68	28	96
Total	296	116	412

Table 2: Distribution of the Sample according to Stream of the Study and Type of Family

<i>Category</i>	<i>Humanities</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>Family with Political Affiliation</i>	<i>Family with Non-Political Affiliation</i>
Number	220	192	288	124

<i>Name of Scale and its areas</i>	<i>Intrinsic Validity</i>	<i>Reliability</i>
Overall in Political Interest	0.92	0.84
Political leader	0.56	0.31
Political Discussion	0.83	0.48
Political Involvement	0.69	0.64
Political Participation	0.80	0.69

Name of Scale and Its Areas	Intrinsic Validity	Reliability
Political efficacy	0.86	0.79
Political involvement and Election	0.54	0.29
Governmental Policies and Programmes	0.78	0.61
Political Leader and Governmental officials	0.73	0.54
Government	0.81	0.65

Political involvement and Election; (ii) Government policies and Problem; (iii) Political leaders and Government officials; (iv) Government

Findings of the Study

The sample of the study was normally distributed and suitable to apply parametric statistical techniques. In order to achieve the findings of the study general descriptive analysis was done and t-Test was applied to draw the inferences.

Political Interest and Political Efficacy of Prospective Teachers

Table - 3 reveals that the Mean of the sample for political interest is approximately equal to the expected mean. The maximum and minimum score which can be obtained on the political interest scale was 38 and 0

respectively. The expected mean will be 19 on this sale of political interest. It was also found that about 88 per cent of the scores fall above expected mean, thus, it can be concluded that prospective teachers do possess an above average level of political interest.

Further, the table also shows that Mean of the sample for Political efficacy is also greater than the expected mean (114). The maximum and minimum scores for the political efficacy scale were 190 and 38 respectively, it is also worthy to mention that 55 per cent of prospective teachers have gained less than the mean score. It is clear with the analysis that prospective teachers are better in political interest than political efficacy, although, for both the variables prospective teachers are in better status. The difference among political interest and efficacy is quiet understandable

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for the whole sample for Political Interest and Political Efficacy

Political Interest		Political Efficacy	
N	412	N	412
Mean	18.98	Mean	121.68
Median	19.5	Median	123.32
Standard deviation	7.6	Standard deviation	12.73
Skewedness	-0.205	Skewedness	-0.007
kurtosis	.260	kurtosis	0.329

according to the nature of the construct that having interest is very general but the development of real efficacy needs serious involvement.

Findings related to Political interest of Perspective Teachers

Political Interest of Prospective Teachers according to Type of Family

It is evident from table - 4 that prospective teachers coming from politically affiliated families differ significantly from their counterparts of politically non- affiliated families; therefore, the hypothesis 1(i) was rejected. Tims observations were also emphatic, as his study on graduate students he found that “father’s political orientation was moderately associated with respondent’s political orientation indicating some transmission of political attitudes within the family. Eakin’s (1971) study also supports the present findings. Eakin in his study found that 85 per cent of the respondents were from homes where the father tried to keep himself informed of public events, almost half of the fathers were party supporters

or members and a fifth of the students lived in homes where politics was discussed regularly among the family. Definitely, the kind of environment in family which facilitates awareness toward surroundings and discussion on current political issues must have contributed towards such finding. The conclusion drawn reaffirms the importance of family in child development and in political interest too.

Gender Difference among Prospective Teachers in terms of Political Interest

The Table - 5 shows that no significant gender difference exist in terms of political interest among prospective teachers, therefore, the hypothesis 2(i) is accepted. It infers that male and female prospective teachers do have similar political interest. All the prospective teachers are graduates and most of the teachers are post graduates too. Their educational qualifications and their socio-cultural background could be the reason for this conclusion. However, the positive side of the conclusion shows

Table 4: Effect of type of Family on Political Interest of Prospective Teachers

<i>Group Compared</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>t – value</i>
From politically affiliated family	288	24.20	6.13	5.49*
From politically non-affiliated family	124	16.56	6.79	

* Significant at .05 Level

Table 5: Effect of Gender Difference on Political Interest of Prospective Teachers

<i>Group Compared</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>t – value</i>
Male Prospective teachers	274	19.58	3.47	1.41
Female Prospective teachers	138	18.55	6.13	

that female prospective teachers too possess equal political interest which is the sign of their interest and competence in future serious responsibilities.

Political Interest of Prospective Teachers According to Stream of Study

In order to draw an authentic conclusion the two major streams humanities and science have been taken for the analysis. Table-6 shows that prospective teachers coming from humanities and science group do not differ significantly in terms of political interest. The finding is congruent with the earlier research of Spence (1972) on Indian students. He concludes that, "students in the social sciences and humanities were more politicised and more leftist than were science students, who in turn were more so than the students preparing the students for profession. Most of the universities selected for sampling, have entrance exams for selection in teacher

training courses which needs to have good knowledge of all areas including the contents related to humanities for science students and vice versa. This and other variables like educational qualifications, media exposure, kind of family environment must have contributed towards such conclusion. Although, the findings is encouraging in the sense that prospective teachers have good interest on political issues and concerns which is a positive trait for their future teacher effectiveness.

Political Interest of Prospective Teachers of Different Socio-economic Status

The table-7 reveals that prospective teachers coming from high socio-economic status only differ significantly from their counterparts coming from average SES, and low SES. No significant difference found with respect to other groups. The finding can be interpreted

Table 6: Effect of Stream of Study on Political interest of Prospective Teachers

<i>Group Compared</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>t - value</i>
Humanities	220	18.72	7.75	.006
Science	192	18.68	6.49	

Table 7: Effect of Socio-Economic-Status on Political Interest of Prospective Teachers

<i>Groups</i>	<i>High SES</i>	<i>Average SES</i>	<i>Low SES</i>
N	78	203	131
Mean	19.89	19.33	19.17
Standard deviation	4.9	5.96	5.83
1. High SES		1.97*	2.28*
2. Average SES			1.22
3. Low SES			

* Significant at .05 level.

in terms of the traits belonging to higher SES. News papers, magazines, cable television, visit to important places, literate and high qualified parents, educated mother, education in good institutes; these and other traits definitely contribute towards generating different kinds of interest including political interest. Thus, it is obvious that teachers coming from higher SES are better in political interest. This finding is supported by Jones (1985) as "Better off and better educated citizens tend to participate more in politics because their costs of information are lower, their feelings of efficacy are higher, they have greater discretionary resources, and on issues such as taxes, they have no more to gain or lose. The finding implies more responsibility for educational institutes to nullify the effect of SES.

Findings Related to Political Efficacy of Prospective Teachers

Political efficacy of prospective teachers according to type of family

Table-8 shows that prospective teachers from non-affiliated families are better in

political efficacy than their counterparts from politically affiliated family. Therefore, the hypothesis 1(ii) was rejected. The finding was against the obvious phenomena that teachers from politically affiliated families are less politically efficacious. Since, population is of adult group, who have their own pattern of interest and thinking. Thus, the personal awareness and inclination of the teachers and their educational qualification must have contributed towards the conclusion drawn. It implies that teachers are aware about their socio-political scenario and have desire towards contributing in political concerns. Findings of Barakat (1978) are also in the same direction i.e. he also maintains that familial political affiliation does not play any role in developing sense of political efficacy among the children.

Gender Difference in Political Efficacy of Prospective Teachers

Table-9 shows that there exist gender difference in political efficacy among prospective teachers in contrast to political interest. Therefore, the

Table 8: Political Efficacy of Prospective Teachers according to type of family

<i>Group Compared</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>t - Value</i>	<i>Inference</i>
From politically affiliated family	288	121.33	19.24	2.17	Significant at .05 level
From politically non-affiliated family	124	121	21.38		

Table 9: Gender difference in Political Efficacy Prospective Teachers

<i>Prospective Teachers</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>t - Value</i>	<i>Inference</i>
Male	274	120.86	19.32	6.2	Significant at .05 level
Female	138	126.02	17.53		

hypothesis 2(ii) has been rejected. The finding is congruent with the earlier study of Oldfield (1978) who also found gender difference in political efficacy. However, Varshney's (1983) findings are not in agreement with the present finding. In her study she found that women are at par with men in the sense of political efficacy.

Political efficacy is an individual's ability to understand the government, its functioning, programs and policies and to feel that he/she or other citizens have the power to influence political decisions. It was observed that most of the male prospective teachers of the sample drawn were hostlers; living independently in an outside station which facilitates more exposure and involvement in settling various serious and important issues. On the contrary most of the girls of the sample selected were day scholars living with their families with good parental patronage. This might be the reason of better performance of male prospective teachers in political efficacy.

Political Efficacy of Prospective Teachers of different Subject Groups

Table-10 reveals that Prospective Teachers of humanities group are better in political efficacy than their counterparts from science stream. Varshney (1984); Asthana (1989) and Dhand, et al. (1991) have also favoured that the humanities curriculum does contribute towards developing citizenship qualities. Tims (1980) study also indicates that social and humanities students are more politically oriented than science students which also support the finding of the present study. Thus, the finding of present study also affirms that teachers from humanities are getting better exposure in understanding the government, its functioning, programs and policies and their role in influencing the political decisions. This must have been the reason of better political efficacy of prospective teachers of humanities group.

Table 10: Effect of Stream of Study in Political Efficacy of Prospective Teachers

<i>Group Compared</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>t - Value</i>	<i>Inference</i>
Humanities	220	121.98	19.32	4.38	Significant at .05 level
Science	192	118.37	20.81		

Table 11: Effect of Socio-economic Status on Political Efficacy of Prospective Teachers

<i>Groups</i>	<i>High SES</i>	<i>Average SES</i>	<i>Low SES</i>
N	78	203	131
Mean	121.32	120.92	121.82
S.D.	22.75	19.78	20.12
High SES		0.18	1.38
Average SES			1.62
Low SES			

Political Efficacy of Prospective Teachers of different Socio-economic Status

The Table-11 shows that prospective teachers coming from higher, average or low Socio-economic-status do not differ significantly in political efficacy. The finding related to SES of the present study is not congruent with the findings of Hess and Torney (1965). He found that the lower class children are less politically efficacious than higher SES. But in Indian context SES did not show any significant effect on political efficacy. The finding authenticates the conclusion drawn with respect to the variable type of family (Table – 8), that the personal variable likes type of family or SES do not affect political efficacy. As drawn earlier, it is concluded that the personal awareness and inclination of the teachers and their educational qualifications must have contributed towards nullifying the effect of SES.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The findings of the study lead to the conclusion that prospective teachers are at good level in terms of political interest and political efficacy. However, the percentage of teachers scoring more than the expected mean was high in political interest (88 per cent) than political efficacy (55 per cent). Thus, there is need of orienting prospective teachers towards state and state's functions; the role and influence of each citizen towards political issues and decisions. The finding has implications for teacher education too; that there is need to infuse citizenship education in teacher preparation programs. Such efforts should be done at knowledge, skill and attitude level.

Political interest of prospective teachers coming from politically affiliated families and higher SES was greater than teachers coming from politically non-affiliated families and average or low SES. It outlines the importance of educational institutes in bridging up the skills which could not be developed in family settings. In schools as well as in higher education sufficient exposures of dimensions of citizenship education (political interest, political efficacy) need to be given through curricular and co-curricular concerns. No gender difference exists among prospective teachers in terms of political interest which is an encouraging sign, and this need to be maintained and further strengthened. In terms of political efficacy prospective teachers of politically non-affiliated families were found more efficacious than the students coming from politically affiliated families. Further, female prospective teachers and teachers from science stream were also found less politically efficacious than their male counterparts.

All these and other observations lend urgency to the issue of coalescing democratic citizenship in teacher education programs. A teacher who is considered to be the pivot in developing citizenship qualities among future generations, must have the belief about the impact of a person in political process as a result of his/her own skills and confidence, or of the skills and confidence of people just like him/her. A teacher needs to be responsive towards an individual as a citizen concerning one's strength; fundamental rights and duties and most importantly individual's

dignity that being the citizen of the country supreme power is vested upon him/her. Thus, the teachers trained on such dispositions could serve the task of developing an ideal citizenry for the country and the world.

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