

Status of communication skills of prospective teachers

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A good teacher is one who is able to inspire and motivate her/his students. For this, it is crucial for her/him to have excellent communication skills. Communication skills help teachers in motivating students, building an effective teaching-learning environment, using information and technologies, understanding students and making oneself understood, connecting with students and colleagues, collaboration, maintaining discipline, using resources effectively, facilitating class and out-of-class activities, etc. These skills are not only fundamental to teaching but also interacting with different stakeholders in the educational set up and beyond, and in all aspects of life in general. The objective of this research is to study the Status of Communication Skills of Prospective Teachers. Data was collected from a total of 400 prospective teachers from eight teacher training colleges of Udaipur district, Rajasthan, India, selected using the Stratified Random Sampling Method. A self-developed tool 'Communication Skills Questionnaire' was used for data collection using the survey method. The findings of the research indicated that overall, the Status of Communication Skills of the Prospective Teachers is unsatisfactory. As compared to Prospective Teachers from the Social Science Faculty, the Communication Skills of Prospective Teachers from the Science Faculty were found to be better. No significant difference was found in the Communication skills of Graduate and Postgraduate Prospective Teachers. In the context of Male and Female Prospective Teachers, no significant difference was found in their Communication Skills.

Keywords: prospective teachers, teachers, communication skills, teacher-student communication

All human beings use communication to express themselves, interact among themselves and to influence each other. Communication is successful only when it is mindful, well-timed, trustworthy and reciprocal.

As per Seiler and Beall (2005) communication is defined as sharing and giving meaning occurring at the same time through symbolic interactions. Good communication skills of teacher are the basic need for academic success of students, and professional success in life.

Teachers communicate instructions orally in classroom to students. Teachers with poor communication skills may cause failure of students to learn. Students need to understand what is right, and what is wrong while it totally depends upon the communication skills of teachers which he adopts in class-room (Morreale, Michael, Judy, & Pearson, 2000).

An individual's communication skills play a great role in determining whether s/he is able to make contact with others, make herself/himself understood and is able to achieve what s/he wants. The process of communication is so integral to our beings that we forget that, virtually everything we say or mean, can be misinterpreted or misunderstood by others. The art of communication is essentially practical in nature and can be learnt and developed.

In the context of education, the part and parcel of every teacher's job includes, creating appropriate learning environments, preparing

and presenting lessons, using information and technologies, using different teaching methods and techniques, managing instruction, managing offline and online classroom interactions, assessing student progress, interacting with and motivating students, interacting with parents, management, other stakeholders, giving and receiving criticism, dealing with correspondence, attending meetings, seminars, conferences, conducting action research, etc.

Teachers use communication in the classrooms in order to accomplish three things: to elicit relevant knowledge from students, to respond to things that students say and to describe the classroom experiences that they share with students (Farrell, 2009).

Effective communication skills are crucial for a teacher in transmitting of education, classroom management and interaction with students in the class. A teacher needs to use different thinking approaches to facilitate learning in class. To teach in accordance with the ability and capability of the students' status and age, a teacher needs to adopt such skills of communication which motivate the students toward their learning process (Sng Bee, 2012; Khan et al., 2017).

In view of the above, it is pertinent to study the level of Communication skills of Prospective Teachers and think of strategies to strengthen these skills as part of the teacher preparation programs. This research paper studies the Status of Communication Skills of Prospective Teachers from eight Teacher Education Colleges in Udaipur district, Rajasthan.

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Review of literature

In the research findings of Cevap and Tas (2018) no significant difference was found between the perceptions of self-esteem of the class teachers by gender, occupational seniority, education status, and age. Between classroom teachers' communication skills scores and the scores they receive from their mental, emotional, and behavioral subscales, no significant difference was found according to occupational status, education level, and age.

Meera, Sebastian, and Bindu (2014) found that only five per cent of trainee teachers were free of communication apprehension and the trainees from science education showed higher apprehension than those in the other two streams. The study concluded that teacher educators should take greater care to reduce the communication apprehension of prospective teachers.

Khambayat (2017) writes in his research article that communication is a mode, which helps every one of us to transfer our messages, thoughts, feelings, thinking, imagination and ideas. Good communication is vital in a working and business environment. There is overwhelming evidence that proficiency in communication skills can make any engineer more versatile, and thus more competitive in today's job market.

Tutkun (2015) mentions in his research that the prospective teachers' general communication skills and intellectual, emotional and behavioral skills are at a moderate level. On the other hand, gender, socio-economic level and settlement are not among the factors influencing prospective teachers' communication skills level. Prospective teachers' level of emotional competence is dependent on the university where they were educated but differs according to vocational education programs. It also differs in terms of the type of education, perceived parents' attitude, and perceived friendship relationships.

After analysis of data, Khan et al. (2017) arrived at conclusion that teacher communication skills have significant role in the academic achievement of the students. Therefore, it is necessary for a teacher to adopt good communication skills while teaching the students. On the other hand, Akturk and Demircan (2017) indicated in their findings that preschool teachers' self-efficacy beliefs were positively and strongly correlated with their communication skills. Preschool teachers' self-efficacy beliefs are also a significant predictor of their teacher-child communication skills, while years of experience and the type of institutions did not make a significant contribution to preschool teachers' teacher-child communication skills. Findings also revealed that preschool teachers' teacher-child communication

skills did not change with respect to their educational level.

Objectives of the study

To study the status (level) of communication skills of prospective teachers (PTs).

To study the difference in the communication skills of PTs based on their background in terms of:

Faculty chosen at Graduation level (Science/Social science)

Extent of formal education (Graduate/Post graduate)

Gender (Male/Female)

Hypotheses of the study

The following hypotheses have been tested in this research study to examine the significance of the differences between the communication skills of different sample groups:

There is no significant difference in the communication skills of PTs on the basis of Faculty chosen at Graduation level (Science/Social Science).

There is no significant difference in the communication skills of PTs on the basis of extent of Formal Education (Graduation/Post Graduation).

There is no significant difference in the communication skills of PTs on the basis of Gender (Male/Female).

Method

Participants

The population for this research consisted of students studying in National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), New Delhi, approved two years Under Graduate Teacher Training program in Teachers' Training Colleges affiliated to MLSU in Udaipur district, Rajasthan, India, during 2018-20. As a sample, a total of 400 prospective teachers were selected using the Stratified Random Sampling Method. Their sampling can be understood through the following table:

Table 1
Sampling process of prospective teachers

Area	Sr. No.	Teachers' Training College	College type	Science				So. Sci.				Grand total		
				Male		Female		Total		Total				
				UG	PG	UG	PG	UG	PG	UG	PG			
Rural	1	Vidya Bhawan Gandhian Institute of Educational Studies, Badgaon	Co.Ed.	14	10	1	0	25	12	11	2	0	25	50
	2	Indo American Institute, Balicha	Girls	0	0	13	12	25	0	0	16	9	25	50
	3	Mateshwari Teachers' Training College, Umarda	Co.Ed.	14	11	0	0	25	16	9	0	0	25	50
	4	J.R. Sharma Girls Teachers' Training College, Jhadol (Phalasia)	Girls	0	0	13	12	25	0	0	15	10	25	50
Urban	5	Vidya Bhawan GovindramSeksaria Teachers' College, Udaipur	Co.Ed.	14	9	1	1	25	13	12	0	0	25	50
	6	Guru Nanak Girls P.G. College, Udaipur	Girls	0	0	14	11	25	0	0	14	11	25	50
	7	Aishwarya Teachers Training College, Udaipur	Co.Ed.	14	11	0	0	25	14	10	1	0	25	50
	8	Rana Pratap Mahila Teachers' Training College, Bhinder	Girls	0	0	16	9	25	0	0	12	13	25	50

The above sampling formed a total of three types of sample groups,

as is clear from the following table-2.

Table 2*Sampling groups of prospective teachers*

Basis	Group	Number	Total
Faculty chosen at graduation level	Science	200	400
	So. Sci	200	
Extent of formal education	UG	229	400
	PG	171	
Gender	Male	194	400
	Female	206	

Instrument

In this study, a self-made questionnaire was used to compile data regarding the status of communication skills of PTs. The structure of the questionnaire is based on Likert's 'Five Point Scale' with a total of 48 statements divided into seven areas: Motivation to communicate and mode of communication; Communication aids, Channels of communication; Message composition (encoding); Dealing with barriers in communication; Interpretation and making sense (decoding); and Feedback. Respondents had to choose one option from the given five options for each statement (completely agree, agree, uncertain, disagree, & completely disagree). Under the marking scheme, the positive statements were given a weight age of 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 (5 being completely agree & 1 being completely disagree) while the negative statements were given a weight age of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 (1 being completely agree & 5 being completely disagree).

The Mean score and Standard Deviation of the Communication skills scores of all prospective teachers included in the sample group

were calculated to be 141.83 and 31.96 respectively. The range of scores of prospective teachers with average Communication skills was determined by subtracting the Standard Deviation from the Mean scores based on the Normal Probability Curve. The lowest score was calculated without decimals as Mean Score-1 SD ($141.83 - 31.96 = 110$) and the highest was calculated as Mean Score + 1SD ($141.83 + 31.96 = 174$). Prospective teachers who scored below 110 were classified to have 'Poor Communication Skills' and prospective teachers who scored higher than 174 were classified to have 'Good Communication skills'. Those who scored between 110-174 were classified to be having 'Average Communication skills'.

The reliability of the present questionnaire was determined using the Split-half method. In the pre-test, the co-relation was determined by dividing all the statements on the basis of even and odd serial numbers based on the scores of 100 respondents, the value of which was 0.86. The reliability was obtained using the Spear-Man Brown formula and calculated to be 0.92.

Data analysis

In this study, data analysis was done in two stages. In the first stage, the area-wise analysis of the communication skills of the overall sample group was done with the help of the mean. In the second stage, comparative analysis of communication skills of different sample groups was done with the help of standard deviation and t-value to check the veracity of research hypotheses:

Table 3*Area wise analysis of communication skills of PTs (N = 400)*

Sl. No.	Area	No. of Items	Cut Point Mean	Calculated Mean
A	Motivation to communicate and mode of communication	11	$11 \times 3 = 33$	36.14
B	Communication aids	7	$7 \times 3 = 21$	19.74
C	Channels of communication	5	$5 \times 3 = 15$	11.42
D	Message composition (Encoding)	8	$8 \times 3 = 24$	26.14
E	Dealing with barriers in communication	10	$10 \times 3 = 30$	28.31
F	Interpretation and making sense (Decoding)	3	$3 \times 3 = 9$	8.63
G	Feedback	4	$4 \times 3 = 12$	11.45
Overall Area		48	$48 \times 3 = 144$	141.83

It is clear from the above table number 3 that:

Under the Area-A of Communication skills, the calculated mean of the scores received from all the prospective teachers was 36.14 which is higher than the cut point mean of 33 for this area. On the basis of this excess, it can be said that in relation to the motivation to communicate and mode of communication, the communication skills of prospective teachers are satisfactory. Most prospective teachers are not only motivated to communicate well during teaching in the classroom but they also use formal and informal modes of communication. They make use of oral and written forms of communication as well as physical gestures to make it more effective.

Under the Area-B of Communication skills, the calculated mean of the scores received from all the prospective teachers was 19.74 which is less than the cut point mean of 21 for this area. On the basis of this deficiency, it can be said that in relation to the communication aids, the communication skills of prospective teachers are unsatisfactory.

Most prospective teachers are not yet using smartphones, microphones, television, radio, internet etc. during teaching in the classroom. They are not using social media platforms efficiently to get their messages across to others. They seem to be unprepared and lack confidence to teach online, collaborate with others.

Under the Area-C of Communication skills, the calculated mean of the scores received from all the prospective teachers was 11.42 which is less than the cut point mean of 15 for this area. On the basis of this deficiency, it can be said that in relation to the channels of communication, the communication skills of prospective teachers are unsatisfactory. Most prospective teachers do not use proper communication channels to get their message across. They neither feel comfortable with their peers to discuss a wide variety of academic issues, nor have they developed the ability to make students participate in it.

Under the Area-D of Communication skills, the calculated mean of the scores received from all the prospective teachers was 26.14

1. which is higher than the cut point mean of 24 for this area. On the basis of this excess, it can be said that in relation to the message composition (Encoding), the communication skills of prospective teachers are satisfactory. Most prospective teachers use mother tongue and simple vocabulary when interacting with their students. This enables them to establish a connection with them which is essential for both effective communication and teaching. They do seem to be aware of how to get their message across meaningfully.

Under the Area-E of Communication skills, the calculated mean of the scores received from all the prospective teachers was 28.31 which is less than the cut point mean of 30 for this area. On the basis of this deficiency, it can be said that in relation to the interpretation and making sense (Decoding), the communication skills of prospective teachers are unsatisfactory. Most prospective teachers are unable to overcome obstacles encountered during communication with students. They are unable to understand their students and colleagues clearly. They also hesitate to express this. As a result, they seem to lose the crux of communication and are not able to participate fully at work.

Under the Area-F of Communication skills, the calculated mean of the scores received from all the prospective teachers was 8.63 which is less than the cut point mean of 9 for this area. On the basis of this deficiency, it can be said that in relation to dealing with barriers in

communication, the communication skills of prospective teachers are unsatisfactory. While they do understand the need and importance of framing their messages in the correct formats, using the proper channels, at the right time and, giving and receiving feedback they are unable to tackle the barriers to communication. Some of them face language difficulties. As a result, they are unable to explain themselves clearly and understand what others are saying. Some may not be confident in using ICT.

Under the Area-G of Communication skills, the calculated mean of the scores received from all the prospective teachers was 11.45 which is less than the cut point mean of 12 for this area. On the basis of this deficiency, it can be said that in relation to the feedback, the communication skills of prospective teachers are unsatisfactory. Most the prospective teachers do not make an effort to understand whether people have understood what they meant in the way they meant. Neither do they believe in giving feedback to others. This may be causing confusions.

The overall calculated mean of Communication skills was found to be 141.83 which is less than the cut point mean of 144 for all areas put together. On the basis of this deficiency, it can be said that the overall communication skills of prospective teachers are unsatisfactory.

Table 4

Comparative analysis of communication skills of pts on the basis of faculty chosen at graduation level (Science/Social science)

PTs Group	N	Mean	Diff. Of Mean	S.D.	t-value	Result
Science	200	147.24	10.83	33.69	3.41	Significant (.05)
So. Sci.	200	136.41		29.78		

It is clear from the above table number 4 that in terms of communication skills, the overall means of the prospective teachers who chose science and social science subjects at graduation level are 147.24 and 136.41 respectively. Their standard deviations in this order are 33.69 and 29.78 respectively. The computed t-value between these data was found to be 3.41, which is higher than the table value 2.58 (df = 298) set at the .01 significance level. This excess proves that the difference of 10.83 points seen in the overall

means of communication skills of prospective teachers who opt for science and social science subjects at graduation is significant. Thus, the null hypothesis number 1 used proves to be untrue.

Therefore, it can be said with 99 percent confidence that the overall communication skills of prospective teachers who choose science subjects at the undergraduate level is more satisfactory than the prospective teachers who choose social science subjects.

Table 5

Comparative analysis of communication skills of pts on the basis of extent of formal education (graduate/post graduate)

PTs Group	N	Mean	Diff. Of Mean	S.D.	t-value	Result
Graduate	229	139.03	5.59	32.45	1.82	Insignificant (.05)
Post Graduate	171	144.62		28.69		

It is clear from the above table number 5 that in terms of communication skills, the overall means of the graduate and post graduate prospective teachers are 139.03 and 144.62 respectively. Their standard deviations are 32.45 and 28.69 respectively. The computed t-value between these data was found to be 1.82, which is lower than the table value 1.96 (df = 298) set at the .05 significance level. From this deficiency it is proved that the

difference of 5.59 points appearing in the overall means of communication skills of graduate and post graduate teachers is not significant. Thus, the null hypothesis number 2 used proves to be true.

Hence, it can be said with 95 percent confidence that the status of overall communication skills of graduate and postgraduate prospective teachers is almost the same.

Table 6
Comparative analysis of communication skills of pts on the basis of gender (male/female)

PTs Group	N	Mean	Diff. of Mean	S.D.	t-value	Result
Graduate	229	139.03	5.59	32.45	1.82	Insignificant (.05)
Post Graduate	171	144.62		28.69		

It is clear from the above table number 6 that in terms of communication skills, the overall means of the male and female prospective teachers in terms of communication skills are 143.47 and 140.18 respectively. Their standard deviations are 36.48 and 30.67 respectively. The computed t-value between these data was found to be 0.97, which is lower than the table value 1.96 (df = 298) set at the .05 significance level. From this deficiency it is proved that the difference of 3.29 points appearing in the overall means of communication skills of male and female prospective teachers is not significant. Thus, the null hypothesis number 3 used proves to be true.

Hence, it can be said with 95 percent confidence that the status of overall communication skills of male and female prospective teachers is almost the same.

Discussion

In a research on the impact of communication between teachers and students, Asrar et al. (2018) found that from the teacher's perspective, motivation plays a crucial role in encouraging students to achieve high scores and that teacher's non-verbal communication played a great role in motivating her/his students. The present study indicates that in terms of motivation to communicate, the communication skills of prospective teachers are satisfactory. They do try to maintain a secure, mutually cooperative and trustful environment with students and colleagues in day to day teaching and learning. They use oral and written communication. However, if there is need for communicating visually or through use of technology, or if simply need to persuade someone they may not be very confident. Also, it needs to be probed further whether they would be comfortable in areas such as student counselling where know-how and objectivity is needed.

Elhay and Hershkovitz (2018) suggested on the basis of their research that teachers' use of WhatsApp for out-of-class communication is associated with better relationship with students and better classroom environment. From the present study one can conclude that in terms of use of communication aids and social media platform, the communication skills of prospective teachers are unsatisfactory. They are not yet using smartphones, microphones, television, radio, internet etc. during teaching in the classroom. They are not using social media platforms efficiently to get their messages across to others. They seem to be unprepared and lack the confidence to teach online, collaborate with others.

With respect to the channels of communication, the communication skills of prospective teachers were found unsatisfactory in the present study. This suggests, these prospective teachers do not have simple, friendly, face to face conversations with their students in the class or with other colleagues after work. Whether they even discuss complex and ambiguous messages and issues and how, needs further study. It may also be useful to get their

views on digital communication for mutual sharing and interaction, formulating plans, resolving problems, etc. This finding however contradicts the findings of the study on communication channel preferences by faculty members for faculty-student interaction conducted by Fong and Sulaiman (2011) who found that more than 50% of the respondents chose face-to-face communication as their preferred channel albeit for discussing complex issues.

In relation to the message composition (Encoding), the communication skills of prospective teachers have been found to be satisfactory. This indicates the prospective teachers take initiative to start a dialogue, they are able to organize their thoughts and express themselves using appropriate words, sentences, tone. This also indicates that they may have a fairly good knowledge and ability to pose questions and problems to their students. This in a way supports the research of Kurniawan et al. (2018) who found in their study that prospective teachers are able to guide their students during mathematics lessons. They were able to use the blackboard, conduct discussions, ask questions, use appropriate language as per the level of students' understanding.

A study by Duta (2015) that analyzed the barriers to efficient communication in teacher-student relationship suggests that from the perspective of students, fundamental barriers to communication in teacher-student relationship are: physical discomfort, disinterest due to the lack of teaching materials, excessive verbalism and anxiety. The present study also indicates that prospective teachers were unable to deal with barriers in communication, satisfactorily. However in this case, it seems the barriers are related more to interpersonal, language, cultural, gender and psycho-social factors and, general anxiety.

Closely related to the above discussion is the issue of decoding messages in the communication process. It is not surprising that in the area of interpretation and making sense (decoding), the communication skills of prospective teachers were found to be unsatisfactory in this study. This could be because of some semantic barriers, or cultural barriers-created due to some earlier experiences these prospective teachers may have had, or simply because of how they perceive the things around them, as also suggested by Allen (2016) in his paper on Coding and Decoding: Cultural Communication and Its Impact on Teacher/Student Relations.

Further as regards barriers in communication and role of feedback in effective learning and teaching, the findings of a research conducted by Sharma et al. (2017) suggest that two-way feedback is important in continuous improvement in teaching and learning. The present research indicates that as regards feedback in the process of communication, the communication skills of prospective teachers are unsatisfactory. The prospective teachers do not make an effort to confirm whether others have understood what they meant to convey, in the way they intended. Neither do they 'listen' and give constructive feedback to others. This may be causing confusion,

leaving mistakes uncorrected and affecting their teaching and non-teaching practices in general.

The research findings of Nicoleta (2014) confirm that the right ambience for any kind of successful teaching and learning process can be created only when the teachers have good communication skills. But the findings of the present study indicate that the overall communication skills of prospective teachers are unsatisfactory.

Teaching is enormously complex work and for years it has been characterized by teachers working in isolation instead of reflecting on their own practices and that of others' and learning from them. The present research highlights that the belief that teacher preparation programs help them to get set for their careers once and for all, is ill founded. Much needs to be done with respect to the professional expertise of to-be teachers especially, their communication skills.

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