

## Soft Skills and Teacher Accountability in the Context of Quality Education

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**Abstract:** Teachers are the catalytic agents of change and focus in any society should be to provide Teacher Education of the highest quality. Quality Teacher Education leads into Quality school Education. 'Soft Skills' are 'Personal Skills' comprising of personal attributes and inter personal abilities that drive one's potential for sustained growth, enhances an individual's social interactions, job performances and career prospects. High lighting the need of providing Soft Skills training for teachers the paper presents the findings of the study conducted on Secondary School Teachers. The study reveals that Soft Skills and Accountability are associated to each other and suggests to have Quality School Education Soft Skills training should become an integral part of all Pre-services and In-service Teacher Education Programme to strengthen and sustain Soft Skills of the teachers directly and Accountability indirectly.

**Keywords:** Soft Skills, Accountability, Quality Education, Teacher Education

### I. INTRODUCTION

In the modern world the stock of knowledge is far greater and the pace of growth is very quick thus, the Indian society is experiencing social, cultural and economic change. In this context the Teacher's academic and social responsibilities have taken a new dimension and made the task of the teacher quiet difficult and challenging. The main responsibility of shaping the behaviour of students is in the hands of teacher. Teachers in fact, are the designers of the future of their students and thus, the society. They are required to exhibit universal values like world peace, justice, freedom equality and unity along with established social and civic values as enshrined in Indian constitution. Hence the society expects teachers should be honest, sincere, and punctual and should follow the professional ethics. Prospective teacher should not only be intellectually competent and technically skilled but also civilized in his/her emotions and refined in his /her state. In this age of privatization accountability should be an important attribute of teacher. Those who pay high fee have right to demand teachers perseverance for quality education of their children. NCTE (1998) has recommended that a teacher in this technological age must have commitment and to achieve human values.

### II. NEED FOR QUALITY TEACHER EDUCATION

The National Council for Teacher Education has defined Teacher Education as 'A programme of education, research and training of persons to teach from pre-primary to higher education level.' It is a programme that is related to the development of Teacher proficiency and competence that would enable and empower the teacher to meet the professional requirements of the profession and face the challenges there in.

Teacher Education encompasses teaching skills, sound pedagogical theory and professional skills. Teaching skills would include providing training and practice in the different techniques, approaches and strategies that would help the teachers to plan and impart instruction, provide appropriate reinforcement and effective assessment. It includes effective

classroom management skills, and use of instructional materials and communication skills.

Thus Teacher Education is not only responsible for improvement of school education but also for preparing competent, committed and professionally well qualified teachers who can meet the demands of a system. A teachers content knowledge verbal skills or enthusiasm for learning necessarily constitutes high water mark for high quality teacher. Viewed in this perspective a high quality teacher must imbibe the four pillars of education as mentioned in the Jacques Delor's report, "Learning the Treasure Within" (1996). These four pillars of education are "Learning to Know", "Learning to Do", "Learning to Live Together" and "Learning to be". According to the first pillar 'Learning to Know' the teachers must have an urge for learning to learn. It can be achieved by combining a sufficiently broad general knowledge with the opportunity to work in depth on a small number of subjects the second pillar 'Learning to Do' emphasizes acquisition not only of an occupational skill but also of the competence to deal with many situations and work in teams. "Learning to Live Together" the third pillar requires development of an understanding of other people and an appreciation of interdependence in a spirit of respect for the value of pluralism mutual understanding and peace the last pillar "Learning to be", will support the development of one's personality and ability to act with greater autonomy judgment and personal responsibility. Thus, these four pillars of education can be considered as the founding pillars in the preparation of a high quality teacher.

In view of the changing ethos and new concerns for quality education have surfaced in the academic programmes of Teacher Education. The institution of Teacher Education whether in the form of college of education or department of education are being rightly conceptualized as a center of excellence. In the past ten years, the drive for quality has been combined with the drive for equality and justice. In the process of striking the balance between the issues of equality and excellence, the latter has been neglected in the most brutal way.

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The teachers produced from the teacher education institutions have been looked at with suspicion in respect of the quality of their competence, Knowledge, preparedness, will power and visioning. The quality at the level of inputs process and products has not been attended too properly and consequently the managers of Teacher Education have been averse to evolving realistic parameters for judging evaluating and maintaining the norms of quality in these areas. The teachers have not been given exposure to viable programmes of quality assurance in this regard.

The author has a strong feeling of raising the quality of teacher Education by giving training to the teachers in Soft Skills.

### ***Soft Skills***

“Soft Skills” are “People Skills” comprising of personal attributes that drive one’s potential for sustained growth, enhances an individual’s social interactions, job performances and career prospects. According to World Health Organization (WHO) “Soft Skills are nothing but Psychological Skills, which insists upon accepting the behavior of others along with their culture”. Fundamental Soft Skills put forth by WHO are: Self- Awareness-Self Esteem; Critical thinking Skills; Decision Making skills: Problem Solving skills; Interpersonal Skills; Communication Skills; Empathy; Coping with emotions; Handling peer pressure and Negotiation Skills.

### ***Need for Soft Skills Training for Teachers:***

Education in human values being acclaimed and accepted as a very new, fascinating and promising programme of education because the values are deteriorating day by day. Educational institutions are the nurseries of the values and ideals of life in every country. Without values and ideas the educational institutions with hundred classrooms, laboratories and well equipped libraries remain unimpressive scaffolding not an edifice of civilization. From a place of transformation of information, the educational institution in the future will make itself a place of producing intellectual work, generating habits of systematic, methodical thinking, readiness for self examination and self criticism, making clear the way for the development of a free moral personality. UNESCO in its report, ‘Learning to Be’ mentioned that in future the educational institutions will work in the form of learning resources centers and characterizes the futuristic methods of teaching based on guidance. Guidance is the means of helping individuals to understand and use wisely the educational, vocational and personal potentialities and opportunities, which they have or can develop. It is a form of systematic assistance where by pupils are aided in their achieving satisfactory adjustment of self and to others in their institutions and life relationship. Thus teaching will be emotionally a joyous and spiritually an uplifting experience both for the teachers and the learners. Thus the role of the future teacher will be multifaceted and multi-dimensional. The Indian society is passing through crises of values and is gradually being uprooted from its cultural heritage in the name of modernization. One of the important tasks of the teacher will be to help the pupils to arrive at a synthesis of material and ethical values, to uphold the past culture and to mould it for a renaissance suited to the future age. The teacher

is to generate love for the mankind there by bringing about a synthesis between doing and feeling by coordinating the use of head and heart in the educative process. Then objectives of future education will be to involve students in an explosion of different value dimensions of life, which go into making a good man, a good life and a good society. The National Policy on Education (1986) suggests: “The National strategy of education has to ensure the availability of highly educated, trained and motivated manpower for dealing with the Challenges which are inherent in the modernization and globalization of the economy. India has to be able to compete with the most advanced countries in any field of production to hold its own. Hence the inescapable need for setting up and maintaining institutions of excellence at all levels to tap the best talent and nurture it with care and competence.

Priya Sasi and Raja Anna(2004) in the article ‘Soft Skills for Prospective Teachers’ asserts that prospective teachers who have great responsibility in developing the society with values and good culture need soft skills to transmit the culture to the students. Based on their study in the area of Soft Skills among Teacher trainees they identified effective communication, listening, inter personal relationship, time management, team work and problem solving as the essential Soft Skills for prospective teachers.

As Fulton (2006) has argued the major determinant in the success of schools is the quality of teachers who teach them and the quality is in turn determined by the quality of the teacher education programme that these teachers undergo as students of teaching.

Review of research studies on Soft Skills revealed that many researches were conducted in the field of Soft Skills. However, these researches were mainly centered on business, management, engineering and information Technology field. The studies revealed the fact that Soft Skills is the key to success in every field. This shows the significance of Soft Skills in man’s life. But very little has been done in the field of Education. The author has given the resume of the studies conducted in the field of Education on Soft Skills.

Sekhar Chandra (2007) in his study found that it is possible to develop Soft Skills among students from rural background through specially planned training programme. Lima, Rui M. et al (2007) studied about the extent to which students and teachers are able to acknowledge the strengths and weakness of a shift in the approach to teaching and learning from a traditional, teacher-centered perspective towards project and learner – centered education. The finding of the study suggested that acquisition of Soft Skills is the key feature of project led education.

Ameeta Pand Purohit Deepti (2005) conducted a study titled “Soft Skills Training Requirement for a New age Teacher” which compared the curriculum of different universities in India and also analyzed the soft skills Training existing in Andhra Pradesh. The result revealed that existing curriculum of teacher training programme emphasizes more on training in teaching methodology rather than developing Soft Skills.

By reviewing the studies related to Soft Skills the author identified a research gap where in no major studies have been undertaken in the area of Soft Skills of Teachers and its relationship with Teacher Accountability.

The studies reveal the significance of Soft Skills training for teachers as well as students. Hence the author felt the need of undertaking a study on Soft Skills and Accountability of Secondary School Teachers.

### III. STUDY ON SOFT SKILLS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

The study investigated the relationship between Soft Skills and Accountability of Secondary School Teachers. The objectives of the study were:

- i. To compare the Soft Skills of Secondary School Teachers in terms of gender, age, teaching experience.
- ii. To compare the Accountability of Secondary School Teachers in terms of gender, age, teaching experience.
- iii. To study whether there exists any real association between Soft Skills and Accountability of Secondary School Teachers.
- iv. To study whether there exists any real association between Soft Skills and gender of Secondary School Teachers.
- v. To study whether there exist any real association between Accountability and gender of Secondary School Teachers

#### *Tools Used in the study:*

- **Rating Scale on Soft Skills:** constructed and validated by Dr. Vijaya Kumari S.N and Vinaya Ann Jacob to measure soft skills of Secondary School Teachers.
- **Teachers Accountability Scale** adopted version of 'Teachers' Accountability Scale constructed and validated by Dr. Vijaya Kumari S.N and Elizebeth A.M.

#### *Data Collection Procedure*

The data was collected by administering the tools on 200 Secondary School Teachers drawn through stratified random sampling technique from the population of Secondary School Teachers of Kottayam District. Data were analyzed using 't' test to test the significance of difference between the means of scores of male and female Secondary School Teachers in terms Soft Skills and Accountability, ANOVA to test signification of difference between the means of score of Secondary School Teachers belong to different age group and teaching experience in terms of Soft Skills and Accountability. Chi-square was used to test the association between Accountability and Soft Skills, Accountability and Gender and Soft Skills and Gender.

The study revealed that:

- i. Male and female Secondary School teaches do not differ significantly in their Soft skills.
- ii. The soft skills of Secondary School Teachers differ significantly in terms of their age.
  - The soft skills of Secondary School teachers who belong to the age group 30 < 45 years are significantly higher than that of the age group below 30 years.
  - Soft skills of Secondary School teachers who belong to group below 30 years and above 45 years. And

Soft skills of Secondary School teachers who belong to the age group 30<45 years and above 45 years are equal

- iii. Secondary School teachers posses same level of Soft Skills irrespective of their teaching experience.
- iv. Male and female Secondary School teachers do not differ in their Accountability
- v. Accountability of Secondary School teachers is equal irrespective of their age and teaching experience.
- vi. Soft skills and accountability of Secondary School teachers are associated to each other.
- vii. Soft skills and gender of Secondary School teachers are independent of each other.
- viii. Accountability and gender of Secondary School teachers are independent of each other.

The study thus revealed that there is a real association between Soft Skills and Accountability of Secondary School teachers where as Soft Skills and Accountability of Secondary School teachers are independent of gender. Soft Skills differ with respect to age where as accountability do not differ with respect to age. Soft skills and Accountability do not differ with respect to gender and teaching experience.

Since the Accountability of the teachers has a profound influence on the students achievement and the findings reveal that Accountability is associated with Soft Skills of the Teachers, hence the study suggest that Soft Skills Training should become an integral part of all Pre-service and In-service teachers education programmes to enhance and sustain Soft Skills of the Teachers directly and Accountability indirectly Study also suggest that performance appraisal has to be encouraged so as to identify the strength and weaknesses of the teachers with regard to Soft Skills and Accountability. As a result the teachers can overcome their weakness and develop the Soft Skills, which in turn will improve their Accountability, thus teaching become a Reflective Practice and effective.

### IV. CONCLUSION

Education is basically a man making process and it implies practicing and ensuring transformation of the humans at various levels of socialization, enculturation, awareness and divine realization. This process of transformation gets stimulated with the help and support of a teacher. It is the responsibility of Teacher Education Institutions to prepare and ensure the constant supply and delivery of quality teachers to the society. In this context Teachers Education should be designed to train teachers to look within for values and look beyond for perspectives The NCTE has been striving hard to achieve a planned and co-ordinate development of the Teacher Education system throughout the country. In the area of educational research, the importance of affective skills in teaching learning process has been studied. A step further, a more holistic term 'Soft skills' has been gaining importance in the field of education also. But very little has been done in concrete terms to plan Soft Skills training in Teacher Education. The study revealed that positive relationship exists between Soft Skills and Teacher Accountability of Secondary School Teachers.

Hence the study recommends efforts should be made to enhance Soft Skills of Secondary School Teachers through well structured training programmes. Thus it can be concluded that by providing training in Soft Skills to teachers as a transfer effect Human Capital can be generated which result in Sustained Development and Growth.

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