

A Study of Teacher as a Researcher: Constraints and Restraints

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Abstract:

In the present paper the an attempt is made to explore and delineate the status of awareness amongst school teachers of district Ludhiana about their subject related research development and new knowledge added to their field. It also attempts to explore what new the teachers are adding to their own classroom practices. It tries to look into the various constraints and restraints of the teachers in taking up research activities to improve their classroom practices. A sample of 100 senior secondary school teachers has been taken from the senior secondary schools of district Ludhiana. The data was collected with the help of self structured questionnaire. Results showed the status of awareness of teachers towards educational research in their respective fields and also various constraints and restraints of teachers for taking up research had been discussed in the present paper.

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of teacher-as-researcher is a prevalent idea that present-day educational reformers have promoted through their articles and books. It is an insight that views teachers as active participants in conducting research to improve their working conditions, support in professional development planning and to revise their curriculum. The concept of teacher as researcher is included in recent literature on educational reform, which encourages teachers to be collaborators in revising curriculum, improving their work environment, professionalizing teaching and developing policy. In recent time, teachers and schools are accountable to all stakeholders for the policies, programs, and practices they implement. It is not enough for teachers merely to make decisions; they will be called upon to make informed decisions, decisions which are data driven. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to be much more deliberate in recording and assessing their efforts. It has been realized that teachers often leave a mark on their students, but they barely leave a mark on their profession. By conducting research in their respective fields teachers will do both.

II. NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Teacher, being the fundamental agent of change and having a significant place in the education system, could assume the role of a catalyst in the educational process as well as in the classroom practices. However, the most general perception of teachers against educational research is that teachers do not have enough time to get into research work or even read research journals or papers; and when they do, they are too tired to plow through jargon, charts, and statistics to find information that would improve their teaching. The positive effects of conducting research in the classroom are tremendous, and without research teachers are losing their valuable resource in their own as well as their colleagues' development as teachers and learners. Further, by not conducting research they also hurt the primary focus of their careers--their students. Ideally research in the field of

education is considered very important by all stakeholders for the improvement of teaching learning processes. But this idealism does not get translated into real practice for a number of reasons. Thus the investigator thought to conduct a study to explore the awareness and perceptions of teachers working in senior secondary schools of district Ludhiana about educational research in their respective fields and also to know about various constraints and restraints for conducting the research.

III. METHODOLOGY

Survey method was adopted to conduct the study. Schools and teachers were identified within the administrative boundary of Ludhiana district (Punjab) and they were interviewed and detailed information was sought with the help of a structured questionnaire.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the level of awareness of school teachers of senior secondary schools of district Ludhiana toward research being carried out in their subject areas.
2. To study the constraints and restraints that teachers might be facing in carrying out research in their respective subject areas.

V. SAMPLE

The present study was conducted on the teachers of secondary schools of district Ludhiana. Teachers from ten senior secondary schools of Ludhiana district were selected randomly for the present study.

VI. TOOLS USED

The tool used in the study was a questionnaire made by the researcher. Besides, a semi-structured interview schedule was also used to obtain data. These interviews were taken to further determine the participants' awareness and their

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attitudes towards educational research being carried out in their subject areas which could be useful in their classroom teaching.

VII. COLLECTION OF DATA

The data was collected with the help of self-constructed questionnaire which was administered on secondary school teachers of Ludhiana district. The investigator herself collected the data from schools from time to time as the occasion demanded.

VIII. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

The study based on the data obtained from 10 schools and their 100 teachers (n = 100) presents the following demographic detail of teachers involved in this study.

Table 1. Demographic information of the Sample

Teachers →	Gender		Age Range		Prior Research Experience		Previous Degree	
	Male	Female	20s	30s and above	Yes	No	Graduate	P.G.
%	27	73	33	67	15	85	47	53

The data written in the above table shows that out of the 100 teachers surveyed, only 15% teachers agreed to have had previous research experience. Even those, who admitted to have research experience had experience of research related to Action Research and that they did while pursuing B.Ed. programme. Only 2-3 were pursuing their Ph.D. course. Rest of them were not presently involved or had not been involved in any kind of educational research.

Regarding ongoing research in their respective subject areas, majority of teachers (85 percent) admitted to have no idea about any such research project.

On asking about their views on the importance of educational research for the classroom processes, a moderate number of teachers (76%) were of the view that though research is important for the quality improvement of teaching learning and classroom processes, however, they seemed not very interested on finding out the outcomes of such research for their own benefits.

Constrains and restraints in pursuing Research

1. Time constraint

80% of the surveyed teachers expressed their inability of getting involved in any educational research because of various constraints. The time constraint was one of the major issues for most of the teachers.

2. Overloaded Schedule

Teachers felt that they were overloaded with teaching task and there was no scope of conducting any such research. Some of them expressed that school time was fully occupied by the academic activities such as making of daily plans, preparing teaching aids, marking the note books of students, maintenance of student records and many other records etc. due to which there was no scope of conducting any such research. Even majority of the teachers admitted that they were not able to update their subject knowledge and related teaching methods due to the overloaded schedule.

3. Lack of knowledge about research

The semi-structured interview schedule helped in obtaining data on self-restraints of teachers in conducting educational research. 90% of the respondents felt that though the research in the field of education was important for purifying classroom processes, teachers themselves were not fit for conducting such research. The reasons as given by the teachers were that they felt that they were not professionally trained to carry out research. They also said that research demands rigorous hard work which they were not able to do due to their hectic schedules. Also they seemed to have thought that research activities are not so important for their professional growth.

4. Lack of support from school authorities

Another restraint is related to school management, particularly management of Private institutions. They pose a lot of constraints and restraints on teachers which becomes an impeding factor for conducting the educational research . Government school teachers expressed that though authorities did not impose any such restraints, however, the routine itself didn't leave any scope of conducting educational research.

IX. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

Educational research is necessary for the progress of knowledge for education and of education. In order to have our classroom processes induced by the ongoing research outcomes, some of the following suggestions could be considered and stressed upon:-

1. Teachers should be provided with enough time and resources to conduct research activities in their subject areas.
2. Research activities should be linked with some sort of benefits that may include promotions or cash rewards.
3. A well-defined policy of research entwined teaching learning process should be formulated by the government and private school management should also be brought into its domain.
4. Trainings by CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education) should include some sort of research related activities to enrich the training part further.
5. Some sort of Research should be made mandatory for the teachers to conduct during every session.

At last it can be concluded that an honest intention is of utmost importance by all the stakeholders of educational processes. A wholesome effort is the need of the time from all stakeholders of the education to improve the situation so that the classroom processes could keep pace with the fast changing world outside and could add true value to what is being imparted. Not only the stakeholders but teachers themselves must understand that by engaging in reflective practice, they can improve the lives of their students by always seeking to discover better, more effective ways of implementing teaching/learning. Thus it helps a teacher in his professional development and also a means to school improvement.If it happens only then the goal of education could be realized, otherwise it will always remain a far-flung dream only.

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